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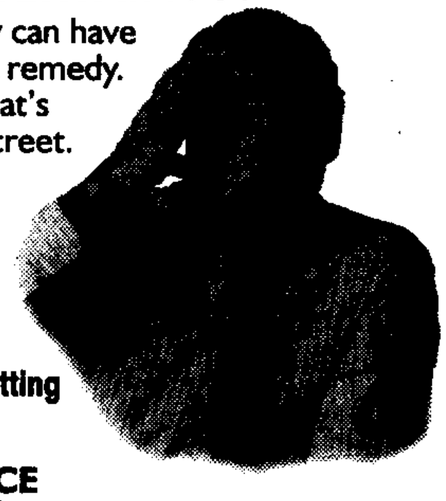

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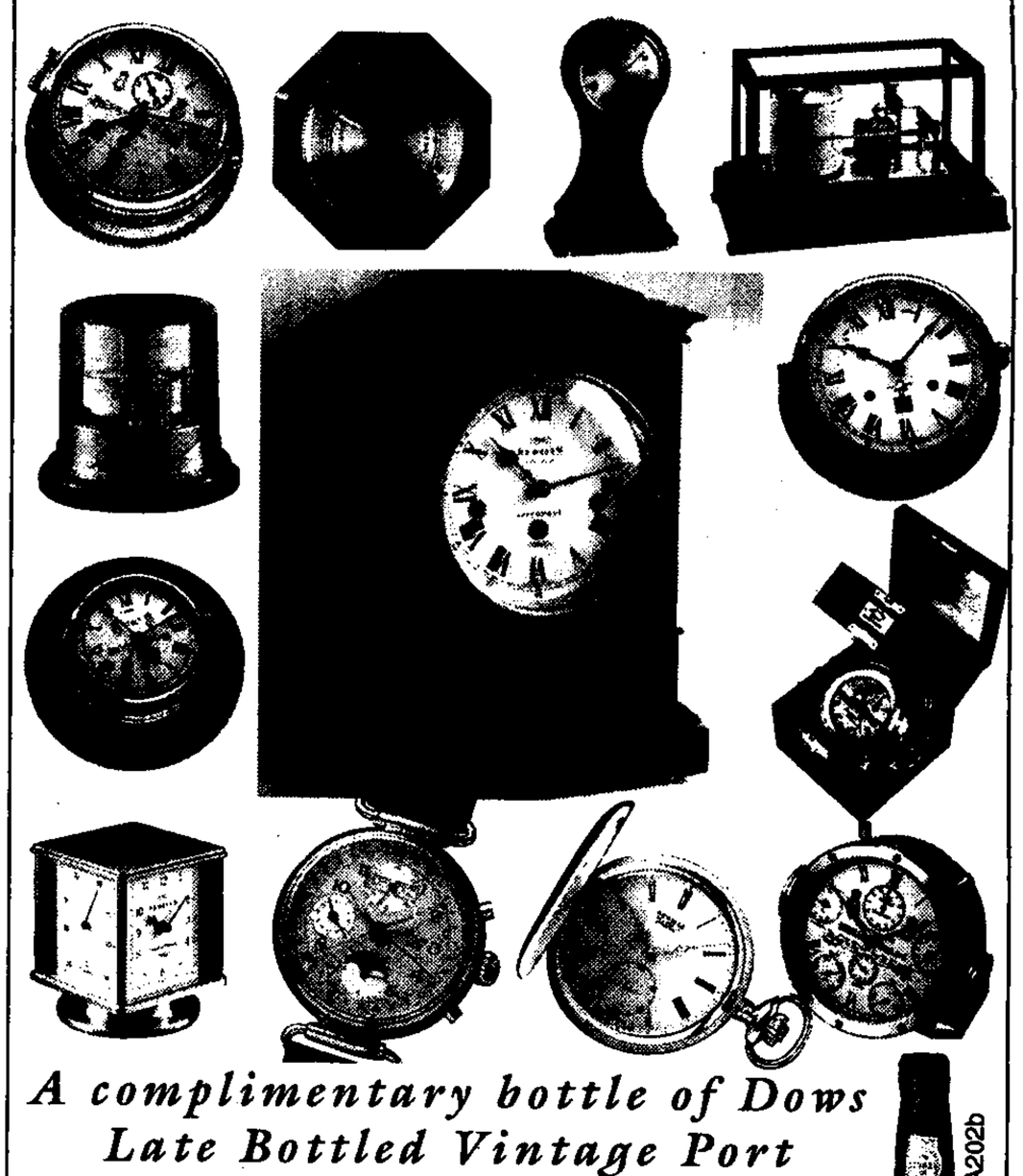

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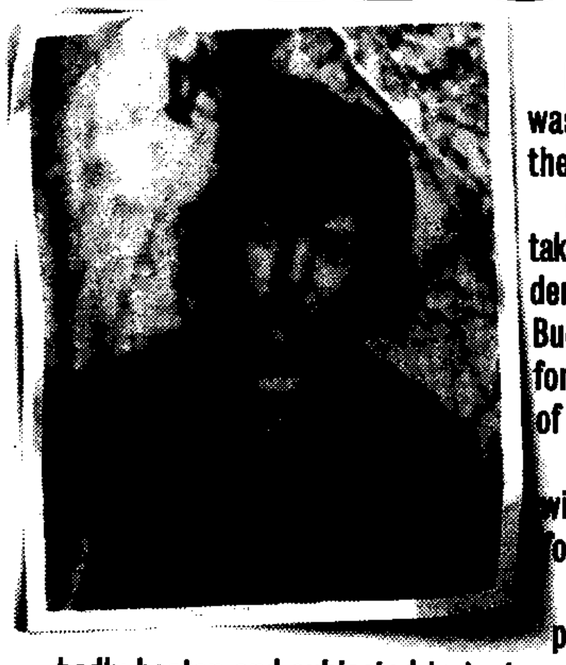

Ngawang Sangdrol was first arrested at the age of 13.

Her "crime" was to take part in a 5-minute demonstration by Buddhist nuns calling for the independence of Tibet.

She was detained without trial for four months.

According to other prisoners, she was badly beaten and subjected to torture by thumb-cuffs.

(One arm is placed behind the back, the other over the shoulder, and the thumbs cuffed together.)

In 1992, aged 15, Ngawang was again arrested for attempting to stage another pro-independence demonstration.

Or, as the Chinese authorities called it, "incitement to subversive and separatist activities".

She was sentenced to 3 years in Lhasa's Drapchi prison.

Whilst in jail, she made a tape recording of nationalist songs which was smuggled out of prison and circulated in Tibet.

For this, she received another 6 years.

In 1996, she failed to stand up when an official entered the room. Whilst undergoing punishment for this, she shouted "Free Tibet".

Her sentence was increased by a further 9 years.

We hear from former prisoners that Ngawang is regularly tortured. That her hands are permanently damaged from the violent interrogation she underwent when she was first arrested at 13.

That she has spent many months of her sentence in a confinement cell with no windows or light.

That whilst in solitary confinement she was fed a single bun or dumpling a day.

Why are we telling you this?

Isn't the world full of people who are imprisoned, beaten and tortured for standing up for their rights?

Yes it is. But it is also full of people who are prepared to stand up on their behalf.

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After what you've just read you may not think that there is much cause for celebration.

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And it works. Wei Jingsheng was imprisoned for 18 years for expressing anti-government views in Beijing.

On his release in December last year, he wrote to thank us for our work on his behalf. His letter ended thus:

"Your work is of enormous value to those suffering from political oppression. It is perhaps more successful than you yourselves have ever realized... please keep the faith."

Ngawang Sangdrol is now 21 years old. She has spent 6 years in jail. She has another 12 years to serve.

A year is a long time in jail.

A month is a long time in darkness.

A day is a long time in thumb-cuffs.

Do you have the time to fill in the coupon or pick up the phone?

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Gnome

I am delighted to present to you the exciting new logo which will symbolize 2000 years of *Private Eye* — The Millennium Gnome.

Vast armies of designers have been toiling day *and night* to produce this extraordinary and uplifting image which shows Ms. Rita Chevrolet (my lifelong companion, masseuse and symbol of Britain) juggling with a banana and a christmas tree decoration, straddling myself whilst covered in gold paint. Critics have suggested that it bears a distinct resemblance to a previous logo by the artist. This is untrue. The two designs are identical.

The work was originally created as a logo for Gnomagra, a drug designed to alleviate male sexual embarrassment by encouraging women to juggle with bananas and christmas tree decorations in order to stimulate their partners.

Now that Gnomagra has been withdrawn from sale following a series of unrelated deaths, it seemed only proper (and cheaper) to salvage the beautiful image of the "Naked Fruit and Star Juggler" for posterity. It is a fitting symbol of 2000 pounds. *(Surely 'years'? E.S.)*

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COLOUR SECTION

Reshuffle Special

RESHUFFLE fever grows with every leak predicting promotion for the man in search of a portfolio, Peter Mandelson, and demotion for just about everyone else in the cabinet whom Mandy, aka Tony, doesn't like.

Dour transport secretary Gavin Strang and dull but worthy David Clark have lost count how many times they have been sacked by the newspapers. Should Strang be forced to walk the plank, any new transport secretary may find the job no longer comes with a place at cabinet table — an ideal destination, then, for trouble-attracting treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson.

Mandy has of course eyed Clark's Duchy of Lancaster brief in the past. But he is now seeking bigger game — and in recent weeks culture minister Chris Smith has experienced a sustained rubbishing for "appearing weak and indecisive". There are juicy appointments to fill at the BBC, and poor Smith seems incapable of understanding that these jobs have been earmarked for "friends of Peter and Tony". Should Smithy see the error of his ways and suddenly realise that Barry Cox is the most qualified and able candidate to replace the despised John Birt, he will find he is no longer "weak and indecisive" but "strong and incredibly *de*cisive".

Poor Chris Smith. Some claim the onslaught against him is an attempt to bounce him into accepting the Labour candidacy as mayor of London, a job he does not wish to do. If so, ruining a man's political reputation seems a funny way to begin electioneering.

No: Smith's problems are largely accidental. They arise out of a combination of the toxic conceitedness of Gerald Kaufman, who chairs the culture select committee, and the sudden withdrawal from day-to-day politics not only of the prime minister but also of his press secretary. As Tony Blair moves up to a grander office inside Number Ten, symbolising his transition from party politician to world statesman, so too does Alastair Campbell lift his eyes from the pedestrian business of nannying ministers' reputations and set his sights on the far horizon of national destiny.

In short, no one's minding the shop. And the same teenage rumour-mongers who have worked themselves into an ecstasy of *Schadenfreude* over Smith's difficulties are also poking their forked tongues at Jack Straw. Despite being one of the most conspicuously able members of the administration, he's accused of being unsound on the final phase of the great Blair "project". That, apparently, is the plan cooked-up with wicked Lord Jenkins of Hillhead to introduce proportional representation for Westminster elections, eclipse the Tory party completely and inaugurate 100 years of happy Lib-Labbery. An outcome, we are assured, that can only be brought about over the home secretary's dead body.

Meanwhile hapless Harriet Harman, the original voter friendly, soft focus "new" Labourite, has been dumped by both Blair and Brown camps, while the strangely silent Margaret Beckett is only the latest casualty in the briefing wars. Her crime? *Thought* crime. Beckett likes trade unionists and thinks the minimum wage should apply to all the low paid — as promised in the manifesto.

"NEW" Labour's new golden boys, Darlington smoothie Alan Milburn and the ambitious Stephen Byers, yet another north-east MP whom the fates doth smile kindly upon, are being touted for promotion come the reshuffle.

Both MPs made a name for themselves in opposition as cultivators of judicious departmental leakers. So feckless are the hacks who recycle the handed out scripts which reveal the brilliance of Byers and Milburn, they have failed to notice that this was exactly how Tony and Gordon were introduced to an unsuspecting public.

Just to keep Milburn and Byers on their feet, "senior sources" play each off against the other, as Tony and Gordon once were. One week Milburn will be "the more highly thought of" while the next week it will be Byers' turn. None of this has been lost on the forgotten generation who did all the leg work for Neil Kinnock: MPs such as Patricia Hewitt or Charles Clarke, who bravely called time on the Heinz 57 variety of trots that kept preventing poor Neil from entering Number 10.

No doubt only kindness has prevented them reminding anyone of the chequered hard left past of Alan Milburn, the man who has taken to having his hair cut in the fashionable Caesar style of the PM; and plain Steve Byers, who once made his name by opposing school opt-outs from local education authorities (LEAs) — and who now builds on that reputation by, er, encouraging schools to opt out.

WHEN David "Two Brains" Willetts asked education secretary David Blunkett for a reaction to last week's interest rate rise, most hacks thought Willetts had finally lost his marbles.

Surely the question should have been directed at Gordon Brown, the Iron Chancellor, whose enthusiasm for rate hikes has repeatedly set him against the governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George?

What "Two Brains" knew, and few others had tumbled, was that Blunkett had voiced concern over yet another rise on the very day it took place. Indeed, so concerned is Blunkett that Brown's voodoo economics may kill the government's flagship new deal policy, Sheffield's man of steel has decided to call upon the services of his very own economic advisers.

Blunkett for chancellor? The education secretary appears to think so.

- ***Blair's brown-nosing backbench babes 9***
- ***Tabloid TV: Square Eyes on that conspiracy 10***
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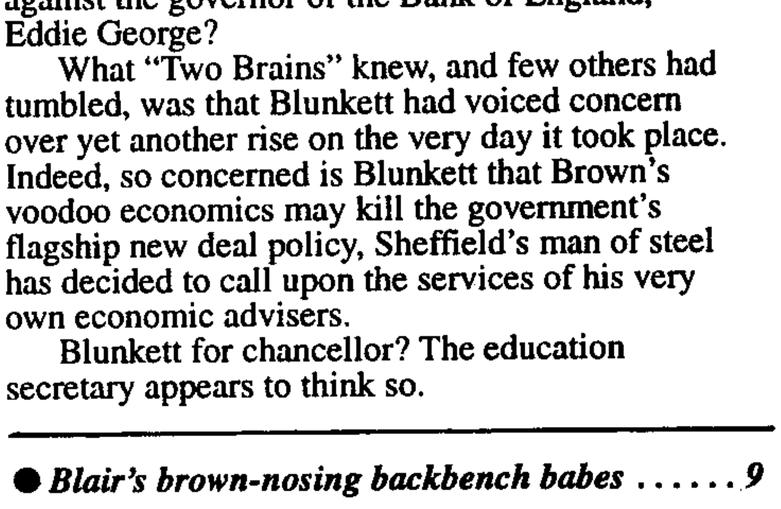


"The British are getting serious – here come the arms salesmen!"

NEWS

AS Sir Thomas Legg begins his inquiry into the arms-to-Sierra-Leone affair, the *Eye* can shed some light on one mystery.

Until now, Robin Cook's insistence that he knew nothing of any official connection with Sandline has seemed to be at odds with the fact that Peter Penfold, our man on the spot, informed the foreign office of his close dealings with the mercenary outfit.

But these apparently irreconcilable stories may both be true. For it transpires that Penfold told the FO about Sandline in a fax on 31 December. Most of the fax, however, was taken up with an extended grumble from Penfold about his lack of a knighthood in the new year's honours list. Only after he had got this off his chest did he mention, as an afterthought, Sandline's impending coup.

When the message arrived in Whitehall, civil servants glanced at Penfold's whinge and tossed it aside — without noticing the rather important PS.

WHO is Sir Timothy Kitson, who wants Jeffrey Archer investigated by the Tory party's new ethics committee?

Kitson was knighted for his long service as parliamentary private secretary to Edward Heath when Heath was prime minister from 1970-1974. Since retiring from the Commons in 1983, he has been president of the Bradford-based moneylenders Provident Financial.

Until last summer he was also vice-chairman of the Halifax building society and chairman of the remuneration committee whose recent outstanding generosity is reported in Footnotes (see page 27).

ONE important man with little sympathy for the public campaign on behalf of Stephen Lawrence is David Osland, who was the Metropolitan police deputy assistant commander in charge of south-east London, where the black teenager was killed in a racist attack in 1993.

In September 1993, Mr Osland voiced his impatience with the Lawrence family, their representatives and any media which supported them. Mr Osland later retired and is now a Tory councillor for the Woodcote and West Coulsdon ward of Croydon. In December last year, after publication of the Kent police report on the Met's reaction to the Lawrence murder, Mr Osland was quoted in the *Croydon Advertiser* (19 Dec) as saying: "My advice to the officers concerned would be to consider legal action."

● *More on Stephen Lawrence 26*

THE unexpected announcement that the Dounreay nuclear plant in the far north of Scotland is to close will not affect the jobs of 70 managers who were brought in recently to "cut costs".

In a contract signed with the UK Atomic Energy Authority last year, the burgeoning privatiser W.S. Atkins supplied the 70 costcutters on condition they got paid a bonus per sacking.

Plant director Roy Nelson has confirmed that after a year in which it was announced that Dounreay had lost vast quantities of dangerous plutonium, suffered its first-ever safety prosecution and irradiated more staff than ever before, at least part of the bonus has been paid, although he won't say how much.

The Atkins contract ends in 2001, but managers are expected to hang on to their jobs and sacking bonuses at least until the plant closes in 2006.

STREET OF SHAME

TO CELEBRATE Lord Rothermere's conversion to the Labour cause, *Tribune* held a dinner in his honour at the Gay Hussar two weeks ago attended by an eclectic band of old lefties — including Michael Foot, Ken Livingstone, Brian Sedgemore and Ian Aitken.

Tribune editor Mark Seddon kicked off the proceedings by suggesting that Foot should take the *Mail* proprietor through the menu, since "Lord Rothermere may not be familiar with Hungarian cuisine". Rothermere pointed out that in fact he knew the country very well, not least because his own grandfather was once offered the throne of Hungary.

The atmosphere became even more convivial after the late arrival of *Observer* hack Nick Cohen, fresh from a six-hour lunch and a boozy publishing party. Putting his arm round the press baron, Cohen delivered a long, slurred panegyric to the unparalleled brilliance of the *Daily Mail*, contrasting it with the unparalleled awfulness of the *Observer* and the *Guardian*. "Rothermere, you're a brilliant proprietor," he gushed.

Alas! The tired and emotional Cohen had failed to notice that another guest was David Leigh, Alan Rubbisher's right-hand man at the *Guardian* — who looked none too happy at this treachery.

To redress the balance, one Tribunite then suggested that Rothermere must interfere in his papers from time to time.

"Up to a point, Lord Copper," the great proprietor replied coyly.

Cartoonist Martin Rowson looked puzzled. "Hang on," he pointed out. "You *are* Lord Copper."

A HUGE inquest is underway at Associated Newspapers to find a scapegoat for the Brooke Shields fiasco, which resulted in a humiliating front-page apology and £100,000 damages.

Mail on Sunday editor Jonathan Holborow blames it on the French police, who supposedly confirmed the tip-off that the actress had been arrested on suspicion of possessing drugs. But the bogus scoop began to spring holes even before it went to press. At 8pm on the Saturday evening — late, but not too late to pull the story — American correspondent Sharon Churcher warned the newsdesk that Shields's father had issued a flat denial that his daughter was helping Inspector Le Knacker with his inquiries. Holborow carried on regardless with his front-page splash: "EXCLUSIVE: Brooke Shields Questioned in Airport Swoop."

Abrupt sackings are not the style at Associated Newspapers. It seems likelier that Holborow will be quietly eased out once the fuss has died down. But who will succeed him? The obvious candidate is Simon Kelner, favourite son of *Mail* chairman Sir David Fester. When Kelner left the *MoS* last month to become editor of the *Independent*, Fester assured him he would always be welcomed back. But that has all changed since Kelner published a piece in the *Indie* last week gloating over "the decade's biggest apology" and describing *Mail* executives as "po-faced in the extreme". He also claimed, wrongly, that the *MoS* had to pay Brooke Shields £500,000.

Mail executives sent a letter for publication saying the *Indie* report was "way off the mark". Their private comments about Kelner's disloyalty were unprintable. One moment of mischief may have wrecked his chances of ever returning to Sir David's warm embrace.

HAPLESS readers of the *Express*, still reeling from Rosie Boycott's efforts to turn their paper into a caring, sharing, Blairite parish mag, are in for an even greater shock.

Rosie has signed up John Lyttle, the sexually explicit gay columnist from the *Indie*, to set up a gay-and-lesbian section in which he will introduce *Express* readers to the delights of poppers, pectorals, tongue-spears and butt-plugs.

The new supplement is referred to in the office as "John Lyttle's Big Pink Pull-Out".

SIMON "Pussy" Kelner has begun his reign as editor of the *Independent* by alienating most of the staff.

Settling back into his £250,000 a year post, the porky Kelner proceeded to lecture his hacks, most of whom haven't had a pay rise for five years, that there was not a "trough" of money for them to "put their snouts in".

He then baffled them even more by railing at the tabloid section 2, saying it had always been unfocused, lacking in purpose and a complete shambles. As one or two whispered to each other, wasn't the former editor of Section 2 a certain, er, Simon Kelner?

Still, Kelner has taken one popular decision by sacking the pompous leader-writer David Walker. By great good fortune, however, Walker had landed a job at the *Grauniad* within 24 hours of leaving. This is of course entirely unrelated to the fact that his live-in lover, Polly Toynbee, is a *Grauniad* columnist and close friend of editor Alan Rusbridger.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Louise Woodward... is innocent. Support our campaign for Louise's release."

— The *Mirror*, 1 November 1997.

'LOUISE IS A LYING MONSTER'

— Headline, the *Mirror*, 29 May 1998.

PLOT TO BLOW UP WORLD CUP; SCOTLAND YARD FOILS ALGERIAN TERRORIST BID screamed the front page headline in the *Mirror* on 13 May. ARMED POLICE HOLD 8 IN WORLD CUP TERROR SWOOP chimed the *Express*.

The gist of the story was that eight Algerians "described as Islamic fundamentalists" were "seized" by police because they were "believed to be planning bombings and shootings in France next month starting with England's opening match against Tunisia". However, this sensational story seemed to evaporate rather quickly — and not surprisingly.

Of the eight Algerians arrested and questioned for four days under the prevention of terrorism act, only two were charged — with fraud. Not one of them was asked a single question about the World Cup. The police raids made such a mess of their houses that, on the following day, two friends of two of the arrested men went to their house to help clean up the broken glass and general mess. They too were arrested, held for two days under the PTA and released without charge.

WORLD OF HYPE

HAPPY news: Matthew Freud, preening PR man to such luminaries as Ginger Spice and Chris Evans, has gone back to his wife and children after a brief fling with Elisabeth Murdoch, daughter of the Dirty Digger.

But he may not escape la Murdoch that easily: she has now bought a house in the Notting Hill street where he lives. Pure coincidence, no doubt.

Apology to Sam Stephenson

Private Eye sincerely apologises to Mr Sam Stephenson, architect, for writing a hurtful, factually incorrect and ill-informed article about him in its November 1994 issue. *Private Eye* acknowledges and accepts that Mr Stephenson is a highly regarded architect of international repute. We wish to express our deep regret to Mr Stephenson, his family, his business associates and his friends for the deep hurt which was caused to them by our article.

WHILE other papers rage at his payments to a convicted murderer, Piers Morgan, editor of the *Mirror*, stands by his decision to publish the Saudi prison diaries of nurse Lucille McLauchlan.

"The *Mirror*, far from believing them guilty, is convinced they are innocent in the eye of the law," he wrote in an editorial referring to the two nurses the day serialisation began. Regarding McLaughlan he told the Media *Guardian*: "She is an innocent woman who was framed by a barbaric justice system."

In private, however, Piers allows himself a little more levity on the subject. Only days into the paper's coverage of the nurse's experiences in her "Saudi Hell-hole", he emerged from his office and asked his news team: "Right. Hands up who thinks she's guilty." A multitude of arms were immediately raised .

CONRAD BLACK has belatedly noticed that something has gone horribly wrong at the *Sunday Telegraph*. Most of the senior staff have deserted en masse — including deputy editor *Kim Fletcher*, comment editor Stuart Reid, review editor Rebecca Nicolson, her deputy Ian Irvine and about half-a-dozen other hacks.

There is a simple reason for this exodus: the refugees can't stand their editor, Dominic Lawson, who seems to have learned his management techniques from the late Atilla the Hun. Some are even willing to take lower-paid jobs elsewhere rather than endure any more of his bullying. He has described the defections as "public humiliation" or even more accurately "making me look like a cunt".

One hack, however, is leaving the paper involuntarily — Washington correspondent Ivo Dawnay, who committed the heinous offence of taking a couple of days' holiday. Lawson, who himself likes the odd holiday, sent Dawnay a thunderous reprimand for his "unprofessional" attitude. Dawnay then pointed out that he needed time to settle down in Washington, especially since he has a severely epileptic child. Perhaps he imagined this would earn the sympathy of his editor, who has often written about his own difficulties with a Down's Syndrome daughter. No such luck: Dawnay was given his marching orders.

Late News: Joanna Prior, the editor of the Sunday Titanicgraph has just left the ship as well. Any more ?

CHESTER STERN, chief crime correspondent at the *Mail on Sunday*, was recently summoned to editor Jonathan Holborow's office for a dressing down.

Why, demanded Holborow, had the paper's coverage of the death of *The Bill*'s Kevin Lloyd been so muted? A bewildered Stern could only splutter that he didn't know and perhaps the showbusiness department might be able to explain.

He then found himself having to explain to Holborow the difference between real life policemen and those who only play them on television.

WITH the *Sun* and *Mirror* both allegedly moving "upmarket", the copycat *Daily Star* is following suit.

It has been relaunched with a new design "to make it look more like a European news magazine", at the behest of Tony Blair's favourite pollster, Philip Gould. A memo circulated to *Star* hacks bans them from using words such as "curvy", "raunchy", "lesbo", "mega" and "stunner".

The scheme to ditch the *Star*'s lowbrow habits is likely to be just as ineffective, not least because it has been entrusted to the same old crew of drunks and deadbeats who ran the paper in its "old" incarnation. Surveying the ruling triumvirate at last week's relaunch party in a West End restaurant — editor Phil "Thirsty" Walker, deputy editor Peter "Scumbag" Hill and assistant editor Linda "Duff" Duff — an old *Star* hand commented: "It's not a *very* upmarket team, is it?"

MEDIA NEWS

CARLTON Television got the franchise for broadcasting commercial TV in London as a direct result of Margaret Thatcher's rage with the previous franchisee, Thames. So it's interesting to compare Thames's reaction to the programme which infuriated Thatcher, *Death on the Rock*, with Carlton's response to the *Guardian*'s exposé of *The Connection*, a faked Carlton programme on drug-running.

Thames set up an independent inquiry by former Tory minister Lord Windlesham and Richard Rampton QC, who were allowed access to all relevant material and reported entirely independently of the TV company (the programme was almost completely cleared of all the wild allegations made about it by the ministry of defence).

In the case of the *Connection*, Carlton has set up an internal inquiry by its own executives — with two "independent advisers", Michael Beloff QC and John Wilson, a former BBC executive. In sharp contrast to the Thames precedent, Beloff and Wilson will not be writing the report. The authors will be Carlton executives.

What happens if the independent advisers disagree with Carlton's conclusions? "We'll have to face that when we come to it," says a Carlton spokesman. Nor is there any undertaking to publish any report. Carlton says simply: "When this exercise is complete, we will issue a further statement setting out conclusions and any measures we have taken or intend to take." Cover-up looms.

SO, farewell, then Peter Cox, head of the BBC's impoverished information and archive "service".

Following endless complaints from programme-makers — not to mention stories about waste and mismanagement in the press — the governors have finally acted and Cox is enjoying a speedy assisted retirement.

There were cheers at the news information library at television centre — and at what's left of the Broadcasting House operation where researchers are even more overloaded thanks to Cox's "reforms".

Since vacating their old rooms to make way for a plush suite of offices for the absurdly grand Will Wyatt, they have been crammed into a single area along with the gramophone library, sound archive and music research. Staff turnover is at an all-time high as researchers wilt in the pressure-cooker atmosphere.

Meanwhile the old gramophone library space has been turned into a lovely new conference centre for management where they'll no doubt discuss Cox's replacement.

JOHN McCRIRICK, self-styled champion of the nation's punters and loudmouth-in-chief of *Channel 4 Racing*, regaled viewers last week with the tale of a reneging bookmaker from Neasden (*sic*) who has shut up shop because he can't pay his punters, but continues to operate as a newsagent in the same parade of shops.

Big Mac's howls of indignation at this reprehensible behaviour contrast strangely with his silence last year about the far more egregious antics of conman bookie Sonny Purcell and his firm S.P. Racing. Unlike the Neasden bookie, who at least had the decency to admit that he had no money and shut up shop, Purcell's much larger operation continued trading for months while owing punters thousands of pounds in unpaid winnings. Even when Purcell went belly-up, McCririck never said a word.

Could this be related to the fact that it was a back-slapping appearance on McCririck's TV show that launched Purcell's appalling career in the first place?

THE reforms of Radio 4 controller James Boyle do not seem to be going entirely to plan.

One new programme already deeply in the doldrums is *Veg Talk*, designed to appeal to the many millions of Radio 4 listeners who talk to vegetables (*er, "grow turnips and suchlike", shurely?*)

A desperate email was sent by the programme to every producer, production trainee and editor at Broadcasting House and the World Service announcing a thrilling new phone-in about, er, vegetables.

"We would love to hear from anyone mad about growing, cooking, eating or buying veg????? Maybe someone in your family, a neighbour or friend — Veg Talk would like to hear from you", it pleaded pathetically.

BBC World Service staff are struggling with the inefficient new computer system ENPS, foist on them by their techno-mad Birtist managers.

On its second day of operation the system crashed and hacks reverted to the old editing system. On the third day it crashed again. On a subsequent day the 10 o'clock news headlines printed by ENPS were not complete, leaving the newsreader having to apologise to listeners. He could tell them that "American sports fans are angry" but he could not tell them why.

FIRST the nuclear bomb... now India is about to acquire Rupert Murdoch, who has been subpoenaed to appear in a Delhi court charged with broadcasting obscene films on the Star satellite tv service.

This is another setback for the global TV empire which is already reeling from Asian currency losses, pan-European hostility and the lack of World Cup football on BSkyB.

As a precaution against Rupert finding himself otherwise engaged, local judge Prem Kumar has already ruled that if Murdoch or his Star-TV lapdog Gary Davey fail to show up, he will order that all Indian subscription fees and advertising revenue for the service be withheld. Since News Corp is renowned for its respect for the law, Kumar's move is clearly unnecessary.

E Y E - S C I - F I - B

FANS of so-called *film noir* are queuing to see the newly-released *Dark City*, Alex Proyas's moody, gothic, futuristic, etc, tale of a city that wakes to find itself and its amnesiac citizens transformed by sinister Nosferatu the Vampire lookalike aliens called The Strangers.

Humanity is saved only by the God-like efforts of one Murdoch (Rufus Sewell), the only man left unaffected. Murdoch's task, no less, is to recreate the world — with much emphasis on the sun and sky.

By an amazing coincidence the film was edited at Fox studios in Australia (prop. R Murdoch). *Time Out*'s pseudish reviewer calls it an example of "post-modern paranoia". Perhaps it is more of a satire — or a sophisticated piece of brown-nosing.

NOTHING better illustrates the tactical brilliance of Peter Mandelson than the "Yes for London" campaign.

Its professed aim was to bring together those in the three major parties who believed in a yes vote in the May referendum on London government. But Mandy saw it rather differently.

Like his leader he is terrified by the idea that Ken Livingstone might end up as London's mayor. So even before Red Ken's popularity was confirmed by recent opinion polls, Mandy and allies — including Margaret Hodge, MP for Barking, and Pat McFadden at the prime minister's policy unit — had been searching for a credible alternative Labour candidate.

Mandy favoured his student chum and LWT colleague Trevor Phillips, at whose wedding Mandy was best man. Thus it was that after early Labour meetings to discuss "Yes for London", Phillips emerged as the organisation's chairman, and his faithful supporter Michael Craven, aide to John Prescott, its treasurer.

These "appointments" were greeted with disbelief and derision by Tories and Liberals, who supported the aims of the campaign but refused to campaign publicly as long as Yes for London was so obvious a front for the mayoral candidature of Labour's Phillips.

The row completely wrecked the campaign, which organised not a single public meeting nor issued a single leaflet or pamphlet. Tories and Liberals only spoke at the launch when Phillips and Craven agreed not to appear as chair and treasurer or to say anything.

Plans for an event for sport and arts "personalities" came to nothing. The only business event which the campaign organised was a small breakfast for 25 in which the entire media showed not the slightest interest. And the embarrassment continues today. Yes for London Ltd cannot be wound up because of the £30,000 or so debts its organisers amassed without being sure how they were to be paid. The only big donation to the campaign was a cheque from the Rowntree Trust. It was never cashed and the trust, in disgust at the incompetence, cut its £20,000 contribution in half.

Phillips is no longer the Labour spindoctors' favourite. During the referendum they tried to bully Frank Dobson to be Labour's candidate, threatening him with the loss of his job as health secretary if he refused. Dobson told them to go away, so they went to Glenda Jackson, current favourite. The only substantial result of the spinning and wheeler-dealing is that Red Ken, without saying a word, has vastly increased his lead.

HAGUE'S NEW TEAM

LABOUR's Millbank Tendency has a new wheeze to drive out off-message MPs and prevent them being replaced by any new boy or girl unfamiliar with such accoutrements as the pager — which tells "new" Labour members when to sleep and defecate.

Realising that whips' reports on off-message misdemeanours would only cheer party members in Bolsover [illegible] Brent East [illegible]eny boppe[illegible] Labour HQ have decided that all MPs must in future appear in front of a panel to decide their suitability. Other Labour hopefuls will have to do the same, preventing any future Dennis Skinner or Ken Livingstone wannabe from leaving the blocks.

The icing on the cake — contained in a "consultation paper" at the party's NEC last month — was in a clause which would allow MPs from marginal seats to challenge MPs in safe seats. Translated, this prepares the way for "new" Labour's favourite son Stephen Twigg to chicken run his way from leafy Enfield to grimy Islington North, the lair of bearded Fenian Jeremy Corbyn. While Corbyn would be supported by his party, he would be picked off by the panel and — hey presto — Twigg changes postcodes.

Furious Labour MPs, with nervous eyes on their own backyards, already refer to this monstrous plan as "Twigg's Run".

THE committee for standards in public life is scrutinising various bodies for its review of political funding, but its own record on actually making judgements is not good.

In 1996, after taking a long look at local public spending bodies, the committee gave a clean bill of health to TECs, higher and further education institutes. Incredibly Lord Nolan, then head of the committee, implied these bodies were over regulated. Ever since, TECs have been dogged by fraud, like the multimillion pound Centrex scandal. Colleges and universities have also had their share of embarrassments.

One weakness of the committee is its narrow establishment membership. Amazingly, when it gave a clean bill of health to universities, nobody raised an eyebrow that Diane Warwick, chief executive of the committee for vice chancellors and principals, was one of its members.

In effect the head of the university bosses' trade association stood in judgement over the actions of university bosses. Warwick wouldn't have blanched at such a circumstance. She herself had moved smoothly from being general secretary of the lecturers' union to become leader of the university managers.

REVOLTING ARMCHAIR and food stool, dark brown vinyl excellent condition. £30.
Exeter Express & Echo

Jane Speedy, 43, of Shadwell Road, Bristol, BS7, fined £240 for speeding.
Bristol Evening Post

"NEW" Labour's recently appointed Scottish head of spin has already resigned.

Paul McKinney took the role after much trumpeting by Labour that he would head a campaign team of five. But he was quickly disillusioned when staff failed to materialise and he was fielding press inquiries at all hours of the day. In his final week, hacks phoning Labour's Scottish HQ were asked if they had actually seen the spin doctor anywhere.

There is speculation that the lack of staff was due to London's anger at not being told McKinney had voted SNP in the last general election. His explanation was that he didn't want to vote for the maligned Labour candidate Mohammed Sarwar. But it now emerges he also disliked Blair's right-wingery and lack of conviction on devolution.

McKinney's disillusionment was strengthened when he was sidelined in favour of Donald Dewar's personal spin doctor David Whitton, who receives a salary of £70,000 from the public purse. And he was further sidelined by the appointment of a former Scottish Office economist to rubbish SNP policies, who was not part of his campaign team and was paid more than him.

When McKinney was appointed it was seen as evidence that Gordon Brown was beginning to take control of the Scottish Labour party since he had once been Brown's researcher. But attempts by the "Iron Chancellor" to convince McKinney to stay failed miserably.

PETER MANDELSON's claim that the millennium dome would be a "state of the art" environmental showpiece looks more ridiculous by the day.

First he passed on the chance to use solar power to provide heat and light for the dome. Now, embarrassingly, he has been beaten in the green stakes by the supe[illegible]arke[illegible] Sainsbury's, [illegible] has asked [illegible] Council for p[illegible] to build "Britain's first low energy superstore" next to the dome.

The store will feature earth banks to prevent heat loss; make maximum use of natural light and ventilation; and solar cells and wind turbines will provide much of the power. Refrigeration units will use an "ozone benign" refrigerant such as propane — rather than the hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) the dome will use, so adding to global warming. As Millennium Experience chief executive Jennifer Page explains in a letter to Greenpeace executive director Lord Melchett, there are "time... [and] budgetary limitations".

In other words, the political imperative is to get it done, not to get it right.

DOUGLAS TRAINER's lacklustre presidency of the National Union of Students momentarily came alive when he lashed out at the Scottish National Party for "betraying students" on the abolition of tuition fees.

His use of strong language followed a Scottish grand committee meeting where an SNP MP refused to say if the party would abolish fees entirely if the party took power in the Scottish parliament.

Trainer's harsh stand got some NUS-watchers scratching their heads. Until now his opposition to tuition fees has hardly been an inspiration to students and he has pointedly failed to accuse the Labour party of betrayal for introducing fees after saying they had no plans to do so.

However, such attacks on Labour would do Trainer's career no good at all. Past presidents of the NUS like Stephen Twigg, Lorna Fitzsimons and Trainer's good mate Jim Murphy, have all gone on to be loyal, on-message Labour MPs. Opposition to government plans could lock Trainer out of the Labour fold forever.

"From now on you'll have to pay"

AS the Bank of England raises interest rates to universal dismay, some recall a certain Labour MP's contribution to the economic debate more than a decade ago. The MP added his voice of support to an opposition debate on interest rates.

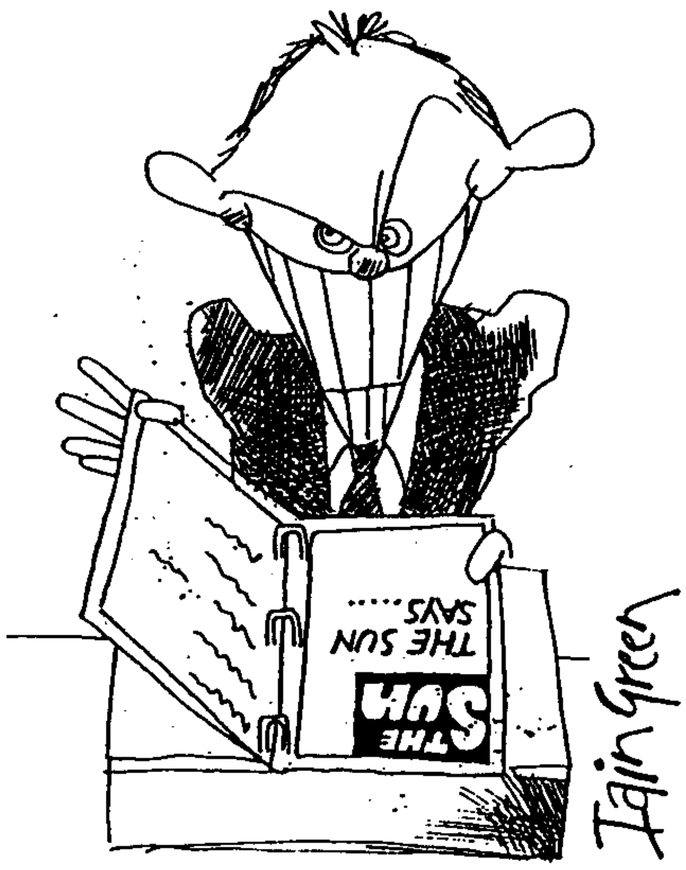
"I can think of nothing more opportune than to debate the burden of interest rates on industry," said the red MP, berating the Tories for their policy of "let's wait and see what the United States does". Proving his statist philosophy, he concluded: "The problem that British industry now faces is not the need for the government to stand back and to abrogate the role of public policy makers."

Surely this speaker could not sit comfortably in "new" Labour today with its love of all things Clintonesque and its granting of independence to the Bank of England to set interest rates? So who was the fiery socialist in question? Step forward Tony Blair, MP for Sedgefield.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Coalition Government of the National Alliance – Chancellor: Hitler. Minister Without Portfolio: Goering"

— From *Penguin's Atlas of History.*



"I refer the honourable gentleman to the answer I gave a moment ago"

ORDER OF THE BACKBENCH BROWN NOSE (OBBN)

THE government's urge to modernise parliamentary procedure appeared to hit a blip last week when members pronounced themselves perfectly happy with the voting procedures that have existed for years.

But in the past 13 months "new" Labour has introduced a few traditions of its own which might also now be under threat. It has become a cosy custom for one of Blair's backbench babes to gently quiz him at prime minister's questions on his engagements for the day, and then ask for confirmation that he really does regard himself as, well, really terrific, and could he see his way to confirming that everything in the garden really is rosy? A few of the most recent examples include:

22 April: Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) wonders: "Is my right honourable friend aware that there is widespread delight in the South West at the extra government money for schools?" Tony is terribly pleased to hear it.

29 April: Anne McGuire (Stirling), inquires: "Does the prime minister recognise that our emphasis over the past year on the economy, health and education has kept faith with the voters?" Actually, Tony had noticed that.

6 May: It is Tony's birthday. Ms Jean Corston (Bristol East), simpers: "May I wish him many happy returns?" In a bizarre leap of logic, she then wonders if he could see his way clear to explaining "how the government will help parents to do a good job at work and at home?" Funnily enough, the birthday boy has got this really good new policy on childcare he's quite happy to tell her about...

13 May: Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton) wonders "does the prime minister share the sinking feeling on reading the rail regulator's latest report?" Tony knows just how he feels. "Will he assure me that he is working towards a better system of rail regulation?" Of course Tony will.

20 May: Mr Vernon Coaker (Gedling), kindly invites the prime minister to "join me in welcoming the national childcare strategy published yesterday?" Tony happily obliges. In fact he just happens to have a few facts and figures about it to hand.

3 June: Oh dear. It appears something has gone wrong with the script. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) wonders "does the prime minister recall that, when we were in opposition, we used to groan at the fawning, obsequious, softball, well rehearsed and planted questions asked by Conservative members? Will my right honourable friend distinguish his period in office by discouraging such practices?" Tony, thrown by references to "scrutiny and accountability" (isn't that what he gets from editorials in the *Sun*?) ad libs masterfully, and has a full and straight answer. He respects Mr Mackinlay's "independence of mind". And goes on to confirm to Mr Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) that yes, he does agree that profits announced by Camelot are excessive...

COMPUTER UPDATE

AN interesting insight into how public money is distributed is provided by *Eye* favourite EDS and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

The latter gave a lucrative contract to run its technical arm to EDS, the computer company renowned for successes with the expensive Inland Revenue self-assessment computer and the hopeless Child Support Agency system. Now DVLA is to announce a controversial new development — photographs on all driving licences — and guess who is handing out this lucrative contract on behalf of the DVLA. Step forward... EDS.

These distributors of the public purse proudly tell the *Eye* that Polaroid, the winning contractor from a shortlist of six, was chosen because it provided the best value for money, quality and service. But was it the lowest tender? "It's not that it was the lowest tender, it was the best offer," said an EDS spokeswoman. "We may be able to find this out for you next week, but it's really an irrelevant question."

Coincidentally EDS and Polaroid are already partners in photographic computer contracts in the US. Another bidder for the contract was NBS, which who took the view that the tender process was hopelessly truncated and that Polaroid had got the contract before the process started.

PS: David Blunkett has just announced that the employment service's "strategic partner" for the next 10 years is... EDS. And Harriet Harman is currently considering a proposal from... EDS to allow the Texan company to run every benefit office in the land.

ARCHER IN NEW SHOCK

"You can't pin anything on me"

GULF WAR SYNDROME

PERHAPS Saddam Hussein should join forces with thousands of aggrieved Scots in his bid to sue the government over the health problems allegedly caused by British forces' use of depleted uranium (DU) shells during the Gulf war.

Allied planes, tanks and artillery fired 10,000 radioactive armour-piercing shells at Iraqi forces during the 1991 conflict. American campaigners fighting for justice for victims of so-called Gulf war syndrome have blamed fall-out from DU shells for at least 30 cancers among US Desert Storm veterans, while the Iraqis claim thousands of civilians have died.

The British cannot say that DU shells are an unknown quantity. Since 1982, 6,255 of them have been shot into the Solway Firth from the firing ranges at Dundrennan, Kirkcudbrightshire — 749 as recently as 1997. These still lie on the seabed with the potential to contaminate water and fish. Following a campaign by the local *Galloway Gazette*, Royal Navy divers attempted to recover some shells in 1993 but the search was interrupted by bad weather and not resumed.

After the Gulf war a 1991 report by the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) admitted that DU in the environment could be a potential longterm health risk. It recommended that radioactive material in Kuwait should be cleaned-up in "total confidentiality" before DU ammunition "becomes a political problem created by the environmental lobby".

PS: Any attempt by Labour to say this is another problem inherited from the Tories would be less than accurate: using such ammunition was the People's Party's idea in the first place. Tony Benn wrote in his diary on 22 January 1979: "Fred Mulley [then Secretary of State for Defence] proposed that depleted uranium from American nuclear reactors be used for ammunition against Soviet tanks... If we can use depleted uranium cores they would turn into fireballs inside the tanks and completely destroy them." Mulley also proposed that "we develop it ourselves and test it in Kirkcudbright, in Cumbria and at Shoeburyness".

LOTTERY NEWS

IN APRIL Camelot spent £5.1m to guarantee a £10m Wednesday jackpot. The object of the exercise was to increase sales of lottery tickets, which it did — but only just.

Sales went up by an impressive £4m in the first week and by £250,000 the following week. Thereafter, sales were actually lower than before the guarantee.

Spending £5.1m to attract £4.25m makes very little sense, unless it's someone else's money you're using. And, sure enough, the £5.1m squandered by Camelot was due otherwise to go to the "good causes".

As Oflot has a duty to see that the lottery maximises income for good causes, and as Camelot can only offer a guaranteed jackpot with Oflot's approval, another guaranteed £10m prize seemed unlikely. But no: the next one came a mere four weeks later at the end of May. This time the outcome was even worse: an outlay of £5.6m led to an increase in sales of under £2m. During this period there was also a guaranteed £20m Saturday jackpot which was slightly more successful, but still left the "good causes" at least £2m out of pocket.

To date, then, the last three guaranteed jackpots have lost "good causes" a total of almost £10m. Still, at least they've raised money for the truly needy — Camelot executives and the government. Treble rollovers all round!

MEANWHILE the TV Dreams scam is proving even more catastrophic: sales are so poor that not enough people are qualifying to take part in the BBC's pisspoor *National Lottery Big Ticket Show*. Camelot is therefore giving winners of the scratchcard's £1,000 prize a chance to go on the programme to make up the numbers.

It all indicates that sales of the wretched TV Dreams card are about a fifth what Camelot expected. Instead of making scratchcards more popular, which was the intention of the game, it has achieved the opposite: May's sales figure for scratchcards is the lowest ever recorded.

One reason for the *debacle* is the mess the BBC got itself into with the *Big Ticket Show*. To avoid criticism that it was encouraging the population to gamble, it took the unusual step of banning any mention of the scratchcard on the show — thus leaving punters completely baffled.

But if Camelot and the BBC have egg on their faces, Oflot has an entire omelette. The lottery regulator backed the venture by allowing Camelot to pay out more prize money than usual on these cards — 63.3 percent. The "good causes" could only gain from this if sales of scratchcards rose dramatically. Since they have in fact plummeted, why doesn't Oflot pull the plug on this fiasco?

TV

Diana: The Secrets Behind The Crash (ITV)
Dispatches: The Accident (Channel 4)

STUART HIGGINS — who resigned as editor of the *Sun* last week — had a standard rant against British TV. He complained that the medium made disparaging remarks about the tabloids, while showing no qualms about copying their stories.

By the time Higgy got out, this complaint was misplaced — at least against ITV. No one at ITV is snobbish about the tabloids now. For the commercial channel has become the *Sun* on the air, competing even with Sky One for that improbable distinction.

Diana: The Secrets Behind The Crash wanted to be a contribution to royal history, but earned only a place in the chronicles of television: as the trashiest, tackiest programme ever broadcast in Britain under the title of journalism. Eighteen months ago, the Independent Television Commission (ITC) regulators severely reprimanded Carlton, Central and ITN over their notorious *Monarchy Debate*. At least, though, that abomination never pretended to be anything but opinion. What was so shocking about this project — made by the independent company Fulcrum for, improbably, Granada, fathers of ITV documentary — was that gossip, paranoia and psychological denial were passed off as reality.

The show began with Jim Naughtie announcing Diana's death on radio, and that was the last straight journalism you heard for an hour. ITN royal reporter Nicholas Owen, prowling around the fatal underpass in Paris, began by saying: "A year on, many will say it's time for the dead to rest in peace." The many, however, were wrong because there were "disturbing questions" still to be answered. It was apparently regarded as irresponsible to allow these to wait until the publication of the report by the French magistrate.

Owen's first high-level witness was the butler at the former residence of the Duchess of Windsor. Diana and Dodi had been there on their last day together. Owen spoke in loud and simple English — "What about Dodi? Did he LIKE the HOUSE?" — while the wrinkled old retainer explained in broken English that they had been a "vairy bute-full cupe-ool".

As the residence in which Owen had just extensively filmed is owned by Mohamed Fayed, the viewer began to suspect who was the driving force behind the programme. And, inevitably, the owner of Harrods now popped up to reveal that the cupe-ool had revealed to him on that tragic Saturday in Paris that they would be announcing their engagement on the following Monday.

Owen was now seen sitting solemnly at the wheel of a Mercedes as he promised to recreate the fateful journey. Even fronting a documentary as terrible as this one, it seemed surprising that the presenter was willing to kill himself. But, sadly, Owen stopped short of the thirteenth pillar.

The documentary needed him alive for the real whoppers. First he explored eyewitness talk of a "blinding flash of light" in the tunnel just before the crash. The really interesting thing about this phrase is that mysterious brightnesses have a long connection with loony views: whether as UFOs, or as the pathway to heaven in near death experiences.

But, ignorant of the tricky history of the flash theory, Owen "proved" that Henri Paul had been disabled by a laser blinder. The intended clincher was royal love rat James Hewitt, who turned up to hint that the security services had threatened him for shagging Diana and that it wouldn't surprise him if the funny people had seen to Di and Dodi in the underpass.

The programme was astonishingly sloppy, either accidentally or wilfully in pursuit of the widest possible audience. Fayed was allowed twice to refer to Diana's ambition to have a "family". This was merely the most visible example of the decision to ignore the fact that she has two living children. Halfway through the film, the junior Fayed was suddenly referred to as "her boyfriend Dodi" as if they feared really stupid viewers would have forgotten who he was. Witnesses were introduced each time as if it were the first.

Promoting one conspiracy theory, the programme encouraged another. The whole of the ITV schedule that Wednesday evening seemed to have been built around this tosh. *News At Ten*, immediately after transmission, featured the "revelations" as the second item. Immediately after that, the *Wednesday Live* debate show tossed over the theories again. It says something for a programme when Sir Bernard Ingham is the voice of reason within it, but this is the level to which ITV has sunk.

The following night Channel 4's **Dispatches: The Accident** was also in Paris. Martyn Gregory's film rubbished all of Fayed's claims, depicting the tycoon as a fantasist trying to disguise the fact that Diana and Dodi had been killed by the lax security and driving arrangements at the Paris Ritz.

In look and tone, the programme sounded like austere and old-fashioned television current affairs. But, on closer examination, there were worrying signs of slipping standards here too. The American writer Thomas Sancton — presented as a critic of Fayed and disbeliever in conspiracy theories — was in fact co-author of a book, encouraged by Dodi's dad, which sowed suspicions. Another central element in the documentary was a long *Hello*-style interview with Kelly Fisher, Dodi's pre-Diana squeeze. Knocking down the idea that Dodi was about to marry Di, Gregory meekly accepted that he was engaged to Fisher.

In fact, though relatively sensible — and a relief after ITV — this *Dispatches* was a perfect example of the Higgins Rule: tabloid sensationalism inserted into Channel 4 peak-time under the guise of dismissing it. Yet better that than the unquestioning embrace of tabloid values represented by the documentary on the other side.

'Square Eyes'

MORE TALES FROM THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

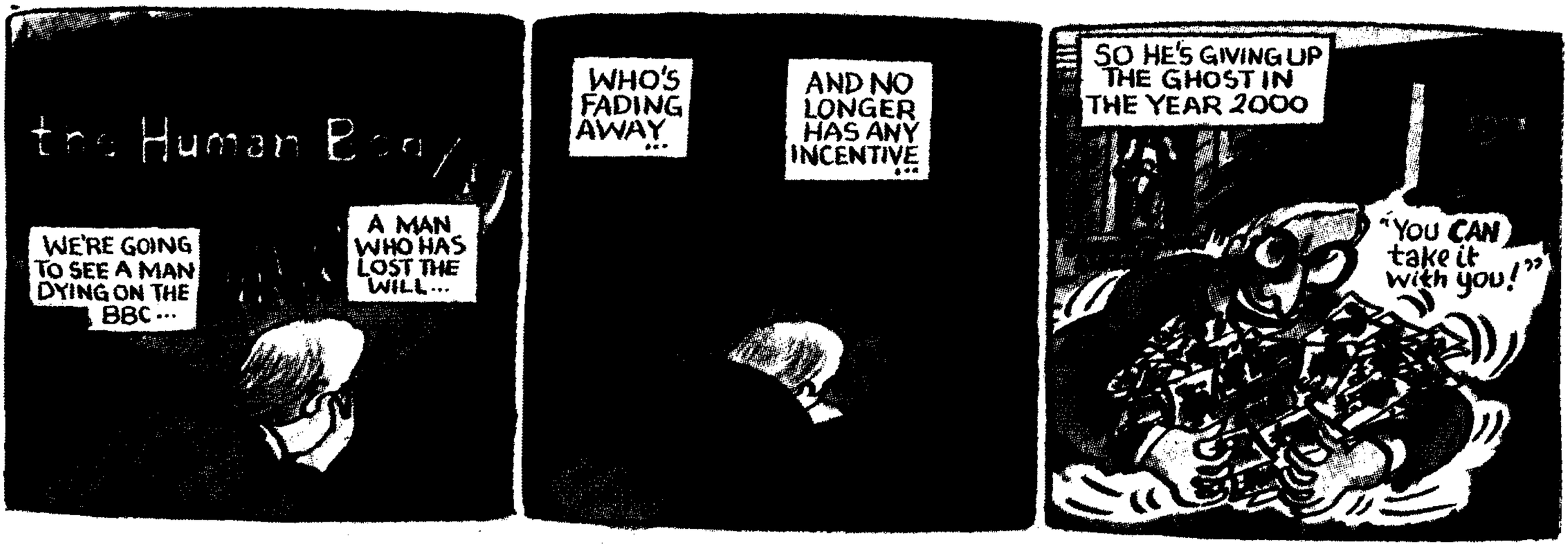
"MOHAMED [Fayed] has always told the truth," Michael Cole informed ITV viewers last week. "The establishment hates him because he had the guts and courage to tell the truth." A full account of Fayed's fearless honesty would fill a large book, but here are just a few examples of what Cole must have had in mind.

To begin at the beginning: when was he born? During the late 1960s and early 1970s Fayed signed a number of documents in his capacity as a company director which gave his birthdate as 27 January 1930. In the 1986 annual return for Harrods he changed this to 17 January 1933. In a 1975 French visa application he gave yet another date, 27 January 1933 — adding for good measure that his place of birth was "Alfayedia, Dubai". In fact, he was born in Alexandria, Egypt, on 27 January 1929.

In November 1964 Fayed obtained Haitian citizenship by claiming to have been resident there for "more than 10 years". He had, in fact, arrived in Haiti only a few months earlier, introducing himself as a wealthy Kuwaiti sheikh.

Having impressed Papa Doc with his tales of huge riches, the "sheikh" was installed in a palace and appointed port commissioner. He thus became the signatory for the Haiti Wharf account at the National Bank — from which he then removed at least $150,000 over the next two months, transferring the money into his private accounts abroad. He fled Haiti at the beginning of 1965.

When Fayed bid for House of Fraser in 1985, his bankers Kleinwort Benson hastened to assure the government that he was buying it with his own money — thus avoiding a referral to the Office of Fair Trading. The Fayeds, they claimed, "are members of an old established Egyptian family who for more than 100 years were shipowners, landowners and industrialists in Egypt". Fayed-loving Ivan Fallon of the *Sunday Times* reported that the brothers "display a lofty disdain for the *nouveaux riches* of the Arab world". Another


tne Human Bea
WE'RE GOING TO SEE A MAN DYING ON THE BBC...
A MAN WHO HAS LOST THE WILL...
WHO'S FADING AWAY...
AND NO LONGER HAS ANY INCENTIVE...
SO HE'S GIVING UP THE GHOST IN THE YEAR 2000
"YOU CAN take it with you!"

credulous interviewer, Brian Vine of the *Daily Mail*, described him as "the Fabulous Pharaoh" and the "Onassis of Cairo".

In fact the family had not been shipowners, landowners and industrialists at all. Nor were they cotton tycoons. Mohamed was born and raised in Alexandria's El-Gomrok quarter, a run-down working-class harbourside district, where his father earned £20 a month as a primary school teacher. As Fayed belatedly admitted last Thursday, after many years of pretending otherwise: "I am just a working-class guy."

One of the most striking instances of Mohamed Fayed's gutsy truthfulness is his treatment of Christoph Bettermann, who resigned as deputy chairman of Harrods in 1991 after discovering that the boss had been bugging his private phone calls. Fayed threatened that if Bettermann moved back to the Middle East, where he had previously run a company, he would destroy him.

When Bettermann went ahead anyway, accepting a job in Sharjah, Fayed wrote to the country's ruler, Sheikh Al Qasimi. "I fired Christoph from the company," he alleged, "due to his dishonesty and his abuse of position in running the company by embezzling millions of pounds from the company."

Fayed then began civil and criminal proceedings in Dubai, where Bettermann had been appointed head of Crescent Petroleum. The hapless German was arrested, interrogated, stripped of his passport and thrown in a cell. Two years later he appeared in court to answer Fayed's charges from behind the bars of an iron cage. After 25 court appearances, all charges were dropped.

Back in Britain, Bettermann sued for libel, claiming that Fayed's false allegations were "part of a wicked scheme to exact a cruel revenge on the plaintiff for his resignation from the Al Fayed Group". Fayed paid him £150,000 and admitted in open court that he had fabricated the entire story.

No doubt these and many other incidents are quite unknown to Michael Cole. Otherwise, when praising Fayed's unswerving commitment to truth, he would himself have been lying — which is of course unthinkable.

PS: As we revealed in the last *Eye*, Fayed told a 17-year-old girl at Harrods that he would treat her like his own daughter and wanted her to call him "papa". He then started touching her up and shoving wads of money down the front of her blouse. Now, in his *Mirror* interview on Monday, Fayed has described his feelings for Princess Diana: "No matter what anyone says, I loved [her] like a daughter..."

Diana balls

"How did the House of Windsor imagine that people would ever let them get away with their appalling treatment of such a rare, shining spirit? And how will we ever live without her? The answer is, of course, that we will not. The Age of Diana has not ended but has rather just begun."

— Julie Burchill, *Sunday Times*.

"We have produced a special album page, which is enclosed, to display your set of Diana Princess of Wales stamps. This additional album page can be inserted into either the front or back of your existing pages. You may even like to insert it in date order between the Endangered Species and the Queen's Beasts pages."

— Letter from the Royal Mail Collectors' Club (submitted by John Duckett).

"In Old Havana by the Port terminal and the Plaza de San Francisco, a garden has been dedicated to the memory of Diana, Princess of Wales... A totem pole, rising up from a central pond, symbolises the Princess communicating with all people 'from the highest to the poorest'. A second sculpture depicts `the radiant sun which shone within her'."

— from *CubaSi*, official magazine of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign (submitted by Paul Sharp).

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF ST PAUL (PART II)

"BOOKS are written in agony and ecstasy, in sweat and fear," according to Paul "Naughty Boy" Johnson in last week's *Spectator*. "Milton called a book `the precious life-blood of a master-spirit'. Alas, they are rarely that, but the worst of them deserves a fair hearing, or at least a batsqueak of pity."

Paul speaks from the heart: it is a little-known fact that he is the author of two novels which are chock-a-block with agony and ecstasy. Though long since out of print, they certainly deserve a fair hearing — and pity galore.

The first, *Left of Centre*, was published in 1959. By then Johnson was well-known as the fieriest staff journalist at the *New Statesman* and the oddest-looking young man on British television. Why did he suddenly turn to fiction? "The object of *Left of Centre*," he explained on the dust-jacket, "was to say something about politics which couldn't be said in a leading article. Because — who ever heard of a leader with a girl in it?"

And such girls! Since the novel is set in Paris, romance is never far away. There is Dora, "the pneumatic mixed-up spouse of the Rock 'n' Roll Peer"; Cleo, "the ravishing young heiress who set out to beat the Fascists single-handed"; and Madame La Fouette, hostess of a right-wing political salon. Fouette is, of course, the French for "whip" — no coincidence, one suspects, since the novel includes what one critic has described as the most embarrassing spanking scene in English literature.

It may or may not be coincidence that the hero, Henry Arnold, is a young Englishman who, after Oxbridge and national service, sets off for Paris to complete his education — just as young Johnson did. One important stage in his education occurs on page 117, when the severe Madame Opal gives Henry "a powerful box on the ear with the flat of her broad, bejewelled hand". Soon afterwards, he tries his luck with Honor Plympton, a rich heiress: "She employed the best masseuse and physio-culturalist in Europe, so that her breasts pushed out fiercely from beneath her white silk shirt (cut by Dior), culminating in hard, menacing points, like the tips of Howitzers poking out from pillboxes." A charming image. Better still are her purple matador trousers, "revealing every curve and ripple of her thighs and beyond..."

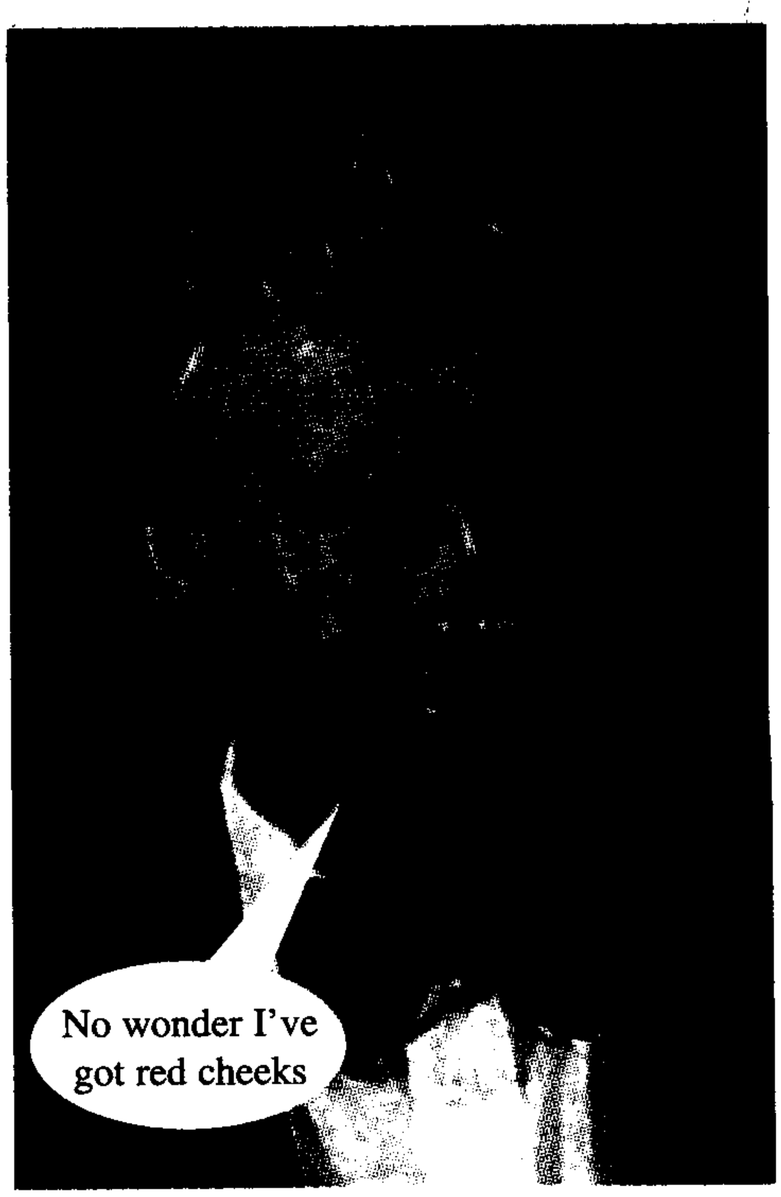
Beyond is just where Henry doesn't get — not with Madame Plympton, at any rate. But he fancies his chances with Dora Treffle, a young actress. One drunken night, while he is visiting her flat in the Rue Jacob, she disappears to her bedroom and dozes off, lying on her stomach. "Henry found his gaze straying to her round and rosy bottom, which rose and fell gently to the rhythm of her breathing. What to do?" Then he remembers the advice of Crick, an English friend: "There's nothing more calculated, old man, to excite a woman than a good hard slap on her behind. None of your playful taps, mind. A real stinger. They come up foaming at the mouth." (As does Johnson, according to the recent testimony of his mistress Gloria Stewart.)

And so Henry prepares for action. "Dora's bottom invited him. Here was his chance, at one blow, to reassume his masculine, paramount role in their relationship. Draining his glass, and setting it down decisively on the dressing-table, he advanced purposefully over Dora's sleeping form and brought his hand down with tremendous force."

The effect is cataclysmic — though not quite in the way he anticipated. Leaping to her feet, shaking with rage, Dora screams abuse at him. "I say," he replies, "that was meant to be friendly, you know." "Well it hurt, you little pig. And I was having a blissful dream. So now you can get out. Quick. Go on, move." Still puzzled, Henry tries to explain: "But look here..." She then seizes a large porcelain ashtray and hurls it at his head.

Who knows what lasting damage such a shameful *dégringolade* might wreak on a sensitive young chap? Luckily for Henry, he regains his composure and sets out to seduce Cleo, a 19-year-old Communist: "His hands did not tremble, his fingers were light and skilful. The dress cascaded into a silky sea at her feet. Underneath she wore only the tiniest brassiere, and a narrow black triangle round her loins. The soft lamplight glowed on her skin, as though a thousand candles glowed underneath." She is, in short, hot for him, and within

SPANKING SHOCK



seconds they have tumbled into her four-poster bed. "You will be kind to me, Henry, won't you?" she pleads.

No chance of a good spank, then. "There was, however, only one thing to do — only one thing that he wanted to do — and he did it."

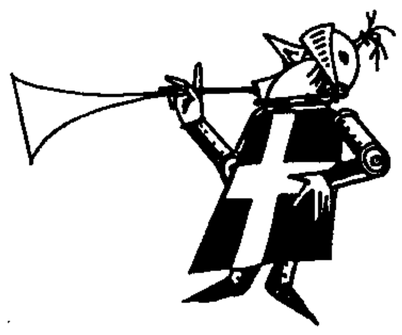
Johnson's bodice-ripping yarn was not to most reviewers' taste. "*Left of Centre*," the *Times Literary Supplement* commented, "is an odd book." Undaunted, he tried his hand at fiction again a few years later, dashing off a quickie novel called *Merrie England* to cash in on the Profumo scandal of 1963. The fun begins when the home secretary is photographed grappling with a "girl sunbather" who has somehow lost the top half of bikini, and from then on — as the blurb promises enticingly — "Cabinet ministers and ponces, call-girls and countesses, journalists, honourable members, bishops and press-lords all join the sexy merry-go-round".

Connoisseurs of the female breast, their appetites whetted by those howitzers, will be glad to know that the smut is well up to the standards of *Left of Centre*. "Felix Appleby, dressed for the office, sat on the edge of Lady Titty Ross's rumpled four-poster bed, his eyes anchored firmly on the ample cleavage displayed by her neglige... There, you don't see a pair like that every day, do you darling? I can see your eyes are popping out of your head, but they're real, all right. Want to touch to make sure?' "

A reviewer in the *Times*, no doubt choosing his words with care, dismissed the book as an "anti-climax", and Paul Johnson abandoned sexy novels altogether. Which is a pity: had he persevered, the leering old humbug might now be known as the thinking man's Jilly Cooper.

DOING THE ROUNDS

Bristol six years later...



IT'S the medical journalism scandal of the century. In all the acres of newsprint, and even *Panorama*'s "in depth analysis" into the quality of paediatric cardiac surgery in Bristol up to 1996, not one reporter managed to spot (or chose to give credit to) *Private Eye*'s repeated exposure of the situation as far back as 1992. So for those who missed it

"Before the department of health bestows its mark of excellence [*a charter mark*] on the United Bristol Healthcare Trust, it may wish to ponder the perilous state of its paediatric cardiac surgery. In 1988, the mortality was so high the unit was dubbed 'The Killing Fields'. Despite a long crisis of morale among intensive care staff, the surgeons persistently refuse to publish their mortality rates in a manner comparable to other units. And although Dr Roylance [*trust chief executive*] and the DoH are well aware of the problems, they won't recognise them officially. Recently, the unit failed to provide a paediatric cardiac surgery nurse for post-operative care because it was assumed the baby would not survive the operation."

— *Eye* 793, 8 May 1992.

"Mrs Bottomley [*then health secretary*] claims that whistleblowing 'through the correct channels' will get results. Staff at the United Bristol Healthcare Trust have been whistling about the dismal mortality statistics in the paediatric cardiac surgery unit since 1988 (*Eye* 793). And while UBHT's chief executive John Roylance, the Royal College of Surgeons and the NHS Management Executive are well aware of the problem, they seem more concerned with silencing the blowers.

"In America, the mortality rate for arterial switch, an operation to connect congenitally transposed arteries from the heart, is now 0 percent. Nearer to home in Birmingham it is 3 percent. In Bristol, despite the fact that the operation has been performed since 1988, it is 30 percent. Sadly, consultant cardiologists at the Bristol Children's Hospital continue to refer patients to their surgeons 'to support the local unit'. As a recently retired and very eminent cardiac surgeon in Southampton says: 'Everyone knows about Bristol'."

— *Eye* 797, 3 July 1992.

"The sorry state of paediatric cardiac surgery at the United Bristol Healthcare Trust (*Eyes* 793 and 797) has been confirmed by an internal audit of the last two year's operations. The results of procedures to correct two congenital abnormalities (Tetrallogy of Fallot and transposition of the arteries) were especially poor. James Wisheart, chairman of the hospital management committee and medical adviser to the trust board, is required to maintain standards of medical practice at UBHT. Curiously he has not felt it necessary to inform the trust board or the trust's purchasers of these findings. Could it be because he is also associate director of cardiac surgery?"

— *Eye* 804, 9 October 1992.

The *Eye* received 10 letters at the time from those whose children were due to be operated on in Bristol and all received the same advice. Go elsewhere. Alas, freedom of choice in the NHS is a mirage and it is doubtful many of them would have been allowed to take their children outside the region. In the subsequent six years, MD only received one thankful notification of a baby successfully treated elsewhere.

At the time the UBHT management made no response to the *Eye* whatsoever. The articles were certainly read and a colleague of mine, wrongly suspected of being a whistleblower, was threatened. A friend who worked as a bank nurse on the unit at the time confirmed that Steve Bolsin (the anaesthetist who sacrificed his NHS career by taking his audit findings outside the hospital) had tried absolutely everything through the proper channels to get something done about it. NHS whistleblowers are, on the whole, intensely ethical individuals who are driven to it out of desperation.

At the end of 1992, I was told that "the matter was now in the hands of the Department of Health" and would be sorted out. I left Bristol thinking the *Eye*'s scoop had truly made a difference. So why did the operations continue until October 1995? The impotency of the department of health and Royal College of Surgeons to do anything at all has been well documented. The General Medical Council (GMC) too must have known about the problems well in advance of any action being taken. But several key questions remain to be addressed.

Bristol has a very powerful body of medical masons. What role did they play in the cover-up? The culpability of other surgical and anaesthetic staff in failing to act — or helping to cover up — is sure to be examined in the light of information supplied by Dr Bolsin. But what of the cardiologists who continued to refer patients to a surgical unit they knew full well to have unacceptable mortality statistics. Did they, too, fail in their duty of care to patients?

M.D.

SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on prosecutions

THE official report on the Watford train crash in August 1996 shows up the inconsistencies in the way drivers and managers are dealt with after serious accidents.

Standard procedure is to frogmarch the driver to the nick immediately, presuming him guilty before the facts have been established. It is only after the driver has been tried for manslaughter that any consideration will be given to prosecuting the rail companies involved.

The jury that acquitted the Watford driver in March accepted that flawed infrastructure played a large part in the crash. The jury was told the critical signal at Watford had been passed at danger several times previously, and that Railtrack had also known about an undersize safety overlap at the location for several years. After hearing the evidence the crash victim's widower said he strongly suspected the verdict would have been different if management had been in the dock. But he will never find out: the health and safety executive (HSE) has decided there is insufficient evidence of regulations being breached to justify legal proceedings against any rail business.

The rail businesses always have the benefit of having experts decide — after the calm process of an official inquiry — if management has a case to answer in court. But drivers are whisked away from the crash in the emotion of the moment by zealous PCs.

It is not obvious how Inspector Knacker is qualified to assess a train driver's culpability. But a built-in feature of the system is that drivers are far more likely to be punished than rail firms or their managers, who are paid to take overall responsibility for safety matters. This twin-track legal system gives scope for even greater confusion in the event of a driver being convicted of manslaughter and then exonerated by the official report. Should the conviction be quashed or would the HSE's findings be ignored?

Harassing the driver is now *de rigueur*. One former driver wrote the *Eye* saying he had left the railways because of his treatment following a minor accident. "The conduct, questioning and sheer spite directed towards me — merely for management to find a scapegoat for insurance purposes — was an experience I wouldn't wish on my worst enemies," he wrote.

The Watford report makes 21 safety recommendations for rail companies. Because of the perverse system which prosecutes the driver before the report is published, almost two years may have passed since the crash before the companies deal with faults which should have been rectified within weeks or months.

A similar shambles will dog the eventual Southall crash inquiry. The HSE will not make its recommendations until after the driver has been tried next year. In the meantime some of the factors which contributed to the accident may continue at various locations across the network.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE (FUNNY) FARM

COME September, the Maffia is planning that every "bovine" in the UK should be issued with its own passport.

Nothing new about that, you might think. Thanks to the European Union we've already had "cattle passports" since 1993. But this is not the old, single-sheet-of-A4-type passport cattle farmers have come to know and love. Now, thanks to EC regulation 820/97 and John Major's famous surrender at the BSE Florence summit of 1996, the new passport will be a much more imposing affair.

The design the Maffia is "consulting on" is a hefty book, three-quarters of an inch thick. This means that, just to store the new passports, the average dairy farmer with 200 cows and calves will have to fit out his office with some 14 feet of new shelf space.

What is more, at the last count there were some 11,833,500 cattle in the UK. This means the total amount of paper involved in presenting them all with a passport will come to 1,420 tons. If a fifth of these animals die each year (a not ungenerous estimate considering how many millions are being pointlessly incinerated under the various cattle-destruction schemes for which taxpayers are annually shelling out more than a billion quid), their passports will all have to be returned to the ministry. Even to store them for a year, the Maffia will have to install 28 miles of new shelving.

Of course one reason the new passport is so thick is that, to promote the "traceability" the EU is so keen on, the book includes a pack of pre-paid postcards to be filled in and sent back to MAFF each time the animal is moved from one holding to another. In fact the owner will have to fill in two cards, one to record that it has moved off a "holding", the other to tell Dr Cunningham it has arrived at its destination.

The only snag neither the Brussels officials nor Dr Cunningham seem to have noticed is how many dairy farms occupy what is defined, under EU rules, as more than one "holding". This can mean that, each time a herd of cows is taken from the dairy to its field, two postcards must legally be filled in for each animal, repeating the process in the afternoon when the cows return to be milked.

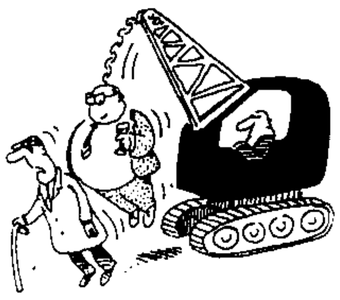
Cumbrian farmer Jim Webster, who every morning marches his cows a hundred yards down the lane to their grazing on another holding, has worked out he will have to fill in some 1,570 cards every week. And since the Maffia has estimated that sending off each card will take the farmer two minutes, it will thus take Mr Webster 52 hours a week to comply with the EU's requirements on "traceability".

What he has not yet worked out is whether this 52 hours will put him in breach of the EU's working time directive, which "new" Labour is now putting into British law, under which it will be a criminal offence to work more than 48 hours a week. No doubt if it does, Mr Webster will be able to hire an extra employee to help filling in his postcards, paid for out of the £4000-a-year profits his farm is currently yielding as a result of the collapse in farm incomes. He has also, incidentally, worked out that to process the postcards the new National Cattle Database Centre at Workington will require not 200 new officials, as the Maffia estimates, but 52,000. Stand by for a further dramatic drop in the unemployment figures thanks to the policies of "new" Labour (and the EU).

'Even Newer Muckspreader'

"Bloody right-to-roamers"

Rotten Boroughs



Islington

THE government's paper on trade unions recommends removing the right of employers to sack workers because they go on strike. New Labour's tiny majority on Islington council has captured the spirit of the proposals beautifully... by sacking housing officers for going on strike.

By prodigious encouragement of "voluntary redundancy" the council slashed the number of staff looking after the homeless from 61 in July last year to 27. Though council officers agreed there were 27 jobs in the department, they insisted that all 27 workers reapply. Ten of the 27 — coincidentally all black women — were told they had failed the interview and would be compulsorily sacked.

Union members in the department, who had previously balloted to strike against compulsory redundancies, walked out in support of the sacked 10. When the council pretended it might negotiate, four strikers returned to work. The other 12, all with many years' service to the homeless, were sacked.

In May "new" Labour lost so many seats in Islington it only controls the council with the casting vote of mayor Meg Hillier. She and council leader Derek Sawyer are devoted to their most famous constituent, Tony Blair.

McJunkets

COUNCIL taxpayers in Glasgow will have to pay more than £1m for the continuing foreign jaunts of "new" Labour councillors.

Despite a warning from Labour's national executive committee, the terribly important "fact-finding" trips continue: to Sardinia; Dublin; Brussels; Geneva; Paris; Amsterdam; Israel; Sweden (twice); Rome; Denmark; Nuremburg; Los Angeles; Berlin; Cannes; Kuala Lumpur; Chicago and Barcelona.

Glaswegians have been assured by William O'Rourke, convenor of personnel, that nothing is amiss: "The trips (foreign) were not holidays. You work very hard<193> and they play a part in boosting Glasgow's international standing." After nearly 15 months of sleaze allegations and concern over the high number of trips abroad, Glasgow's international standing could do with a boost.

Meanwhile life goes on as before in North Lanarkshire — even though £4.8m has "fallen into a black hole of unaccountability" from the council's direct labour organisation. Councillors don't seem too worried that a plumber got £54,000 for a year's work and that £1m of council stock had gone missing. Four of them, for example, including provost Vincent Matheson, are going on a £2,000 trip to watch Scotland play Brazil in the World Cup.

Ilfracombe

THE sleepy north Devon council is doing its bit to rival London's looniest for municipal chaos. A report by the district auditor lists 57 ways it has cocked up.

These include: overspending by £166,000; providing falsified receipts; ignoring mail from the bank; paying staff in cash to avoid tax; failing to undertake financial controls or basic book-keeping; and not keeping minutes of meetings.

No budget was made for two consecutive financial years, the deficits at the end of which totalled £55,000 and £110,000 respectively. These misdemeanours have led to a serious shedding of workers: all but one of the 18 staff have been laid off.

On a lighter note, £4,500 paid to the council from the lottery which should have been spent on a tapestry to hang in the new theatre is missing; and Inspector Knacker is searching for some £13,000 of Ilfracombe money which is not accounted for.

How Wales Works

MORE on the Taffia and Russell Goodway, leader of Cardiff county council, who on £22,000 a year is one of Britain's highest paid council leaders.

The busy Goodway earns this by judicious use of the allowances for committee chairmen and vice-chairmen which guarantee an average allowance of £9,000 a year to councillors, way-above the norm. The "independent" allowance body which sanctioned such generosity included Lord Brookes of Tremorfa and Noreen Bray, of the PR consultancy Good Relations.

Coincidentally, when the county council spent £100,000 on the Taff Vale child abuse inquiry last year, it employed Good Relations to smooth the waters. Still, not everything is so smooth for Goodway. He had a bust-up recently with Welsh secretary Ron Davies over the new Welsh assembly. Davies has chosen a waterfront building in the Cardiff Bay development, which leaves Goodway with a massive white elephant in the form of Cardiff city hall, recently refurbished for £1.6m and now redundant.

Still, Coun Goodway should not be too disheartened. He is also a member of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (£5,000 for 0.5 days a week), and will no doubt want to celebrate the arrival of the assembly with deputy chairman of the corporation, Lord "Generous" Brookes of Tremorfa (£19,000 pa for two days a week).

Leeds

NO ONE was more delighted at the defeat in council elections in West Leeds of dubious businessman Fabian Hamilton (see *Eyes passim*), the "new" Labour MP for Leeds North East, than the Green party's David Blackburn who took his seat.

Not that Blackburn's past is without incident. Before the modern Greens were invented he was an active member of the Labour party in Leeds. In 1981, when he was unemployed, he served both as treasurer of the local party and election agent for the Armley ward until questions were asked by auditors about a missing £800.

Though Blackburn was given the chance by Alan Gunter, then branch chairman, to explain where the money had gone and when the Labour party might expect to see it again, the invitation was declined. Blackburn did not reappear on the political scene until four years later, when he was clad in green. The money remains unpaid.

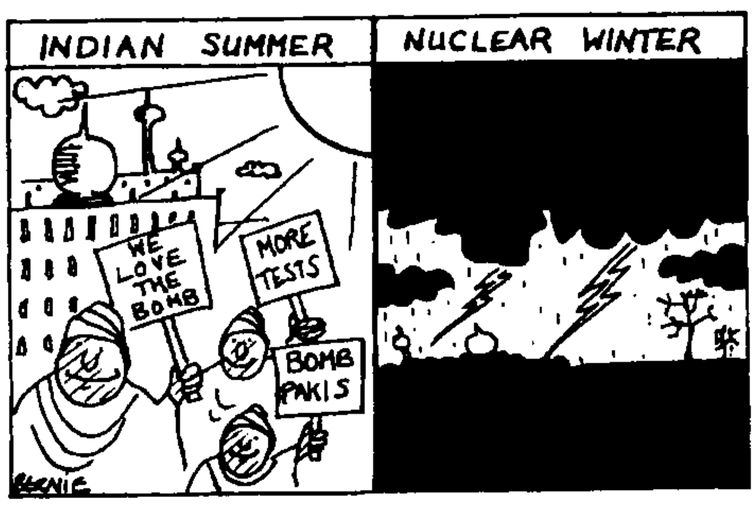
Southwark

NO sooner had Southwark councillors voted themselves pay rises of up to 125 percent (see last *Eye*) than the council was at the court of appeal trying to wriggle out of its responsibility to soundproof the homes of 18 council tenants.

The high court had upheld the tenants' right to soundproofing which the council estimated would cost around £60,000. And how much is it spending on legal costs to mount its appeal against sound-proofing? Er, around £60,000.

Bromley

BROMLEY Conservatives boast about primary education in the Tory borough. Their leaflet announced their schools' national rating: "2nd out of 107 Boroughs in Reading. 3rd out of 107 Boroughs in Spelling. Bromley Conservative Council doing it's [*sic*] best for our children".



Pseuds Corner

When Tony Adams climbed the steps in the shimmering light of late afternoon, he took the trophy in his hands and planted a gentle kiss on it. Then when he held it up for the scarlet hordes away to his right, they turned their faces and their outstretched hands to him like a great field of sunflowers reaching for the sun.

OLIVER HOLT
The Times

Rocabar: the name is mysterious, the bearer of unfathomable secrets.

Its accent is musical, familiar and warm. It needs to be said over and over again, letting it ring out its musicality. It resounds like an echo, caresses, envelops, like the horse blanket that gave it its name. It perpetuates the unfolding of the entire tale of the Hermès spirit: the sensuousness of fine materials, harmony in contrast and a certain art of living. They are values to be shared in the vapour trail of the captivating, enveloping new men's perfume.

Hermès advertising material

Despite his reputation for Neanderthal sexism, Sinatra's combination of strutting male attitude with melting, female internality had much to offer the women's movement. He was one of the principal models for my theory of street-smart feminism which asks every woman to be responsible for her own safety and militant self-defence.

CAMILLE PAGLIA
Guardian

During the past few days Karl (Lagerfeld) has been in Hamburg, Berlin and Biarritz. Later today he must go to Paris and then to Japan. But for the moment he has descended on London, albeit for less than 24 hours, and to see him descend, even for a short time, is staggering.

He arrives by private jet, a Flaçon 900 by Dassault, at Biggin Hill (he feels safe in Dassault, because he knows the family). An hour later he is ready for his guests. Imagine the combination of a visit by Leonardo DiCaprio, a royal walkabout, and a G8 summit; and you have some idea of what it felt like to be with Lagerfeld and his entourage last night.

NICK FOULKES
Evening Standard

But this latest Gazza story is a triviality wrapped in a fatuity inside a nugacity.

SIMON BARNES
The Times

The first part of her essay concludes with naming the spatialized polity of the (Derridean) sophist — the city of modernity — as necropolis. For in denying temporality and the spoken word, and "being" as the gift of an excessive beyond, eliciting an erotics gaze (sight which participates in that which is seen), in favour of spatialized writing and being as the "given" commanded by a panoptic vision, modernity ironically embraces necrophilia where it would affirm only life.

GERALD LOUGHLIN
Review of Catherine Pickstock's "After Writing", Times Literary Supplement

CONTRIBUTORS: Peter Davies, David Ker, Allison McKechnie, J. Dover, Roland Phillips, Howard Shaw.

£10 paid for entries

Letters

Kamikaze cover

Sir,

This is just to say how disgusted I am at the front cover of EYE *951. Not only is it guaranteed to be very offensive to Japanese people. It isn't bloody funny. Would you have used "nigger" rather than "nip" on a front cover? If not, why not?*

As the World Cup approaches, and newspapers that one always thought were the antithesis of the EYE *fan the flames of xenophobia, it's sickening to see you helping to create a climate tolerant of racial hatred.*

The courageous (and funny) front covers you could have had are on page 17 of the same issue (under "No, it's yes!"). What's the matter? Scared? Isn't that what satire's supposed to do? Put the wind up its own, not pick on foreigners who won't be able to answer back.

Look around your office. Perhaps if there were more (or any) non-white faces in it such a cover would never have made it on to the streets.

In disgust,
MARK STRINGER,

Via e-mail.

Sir,

I was really ashamed to receive the latest EYE *through the letter box, and initially tried to hide the cover from my (Chinese — "Chink" to you) husband. Why is it that while use of the words "Paki", "coon" etc, are seen as totally unacceptable, racist abuse of the East Asian community can be seen as thigh-smacking good fun?*

It should be remembered that the majority of victims of Japanese war crimes in the Second World War were East Asians — the rape of Nanking being just one example. Some of your readership aren't old enough to have seen your hilarious 70s cover the first time round, and could have done without knowing about it.

Yours faithfully,
BECKY FRANCIS,

London SW17.

Sir,

You should apologise for the front cover of 951. Since when has crude xenophobia and nationalism been funny? You'll be supporting England for the World Cup next.

Regards,
KEITH FLETT,

London N17.

Sir,

I must thank you for the timely arrival of your latest edition. Having recently experienced Japanese mismanagement and incompetence at the hands of my boss, and subsequently failed to extract anything resembling an apology for his actions, your Akihito cover cheered me up no end.

Best regards,
NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD.

"Don't you just hate the way they mentally undress you?"

Oaten alive?

Sir,

You are unduly impressed by the effectiveness of leaflets delivered by Mark Oaten. True, in the two Labour wards concerned, their vote was down by 43 percent on the previous election. But in the four other wards in Winchester City it also fell — by precisely the same 43 percent.

Yours etc,
HARVEY COLE,

Winchester.

Cock crowing

Sir,

It may interest your readers to know that the Chalk Giant of Cerne Abbas had his penis covered during a visit to Dorset by Queen Victoria (when some of the villages prefixed by "Piddle" were changed to "Puddle").

When eventually the giant had his manhood restored it was mistakenly raised by six feet to what had previously been his navel. Not even Viagra could claim such a successful improvement.

Long may you be fertile,
JOHN HUNT,

New Barnet, Herts.

NEW OLD SAYINGS

Marry in haste, repent in leisurewear

Any enquiries to Street Services section on FREE CALL 0500 834333 or FREE CALL MINI COM 0500 431143 for those who are dead or hard of hearing.

City of Coventry advertisement

Family fortunes

Sir,

Your Number Crunching in issue 951 had the astonishing figure of £20m as the amount accumulated by the Suharto family in Indonesia. This is a serious insult to the integrity of the Suharto family.

Suharto and his family would not have wasted 30 years in power for the paltry sum of £20m. By the nature of corrupt political leaders it is difficult to put an accurate figure on how much the Suharto family have raped from the country, but serious estimates range between US$16bn and US$40bn (that is, £9.7bn to £24.4 bn).

Your reporting on this matter is typical of the lack of seriousness exhibited by the negative western media towards the achievements of Asian leaders.

Regards,
NICK COX,

Via e-mail.

Cambridge blue

Sir,

Piloti (Nooks & Corners, 29 May) rightly hints at the worship of two different gods in the current disarray over Anglican attitudes to buildings. The ethical monotheism of the Judaeo-Christian tradition has never been particularly friendly to aesthetic values. The aestheticism espoused by English Heritage and PRIVATE EYE *is a different religion and bears no relation to the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, whose only recorded comment on an item of man-made beauty is to be found in Mark 13:1-2.*

In the case of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Cambridge, the plans being proposed by the church would actually defend the interests of the antiquarian more effectively in the long run than English Heritage's "pickle in aspic" approach. They have also met with the strong approval of the city council, the diocese, the congregation, the tourist board and the public at large. It is sad that English Heritage are not prepared to allow their objections to be judged by the normal processes.

Yours sincerely,
THE REV MARK ASHTON,

The Round Church at St Andrew The Great, Cambridge.

Lookalike

Routledge **Mainwaring**

Sir,

Am I the only person to have noticed the extraordinary resemblance between Captain Mainwaring, commanding officer of DAD'S ARMY, *and the new* MIRROR *political correspondent Paul Routledge?*

Yours,
ANNABEL FERRIMAN,

London N7.

Green with *ennui*

Sir,

The writer of Rotten Boroughs should not find it incredible that John McCafferty, former leader of Hackney borough council, has lost his seat to a Green party candidate (one of two won by the Greens in Hackney). Apart from the high quality of the local candidates it is not surprising that the voters should choose a party that is as pissed off with all three of Labour, Tory and LibDem, as they are. Most of the media doesn't take much interest in local government or the Green party, so Rotten Boroughs may note that we have established a firm toehold in local politics and our presence is growing — up from 21 seats to 27 in the last elections.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS PADLEY,

Market Rasen, Lincolnshire.

LUVVIES

"For some reason or other I ended up the biggest TV star in the world and it's hard to stop because, if I don't go to work, *Baywatch* dies."

DAVID HASSELHOFF
Hello

CONTRIBUTOR: A.P.R.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

I-SPY

Tokyo, 1989 visit of Duke of Edinburgh

Submitted by Michael Fitzpatrick. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Chestnut stuffing

Sir,

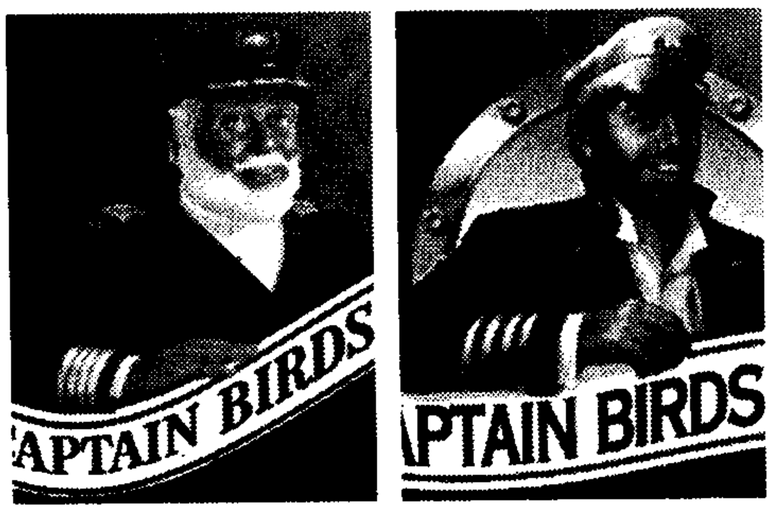
It was generous of you to promote me to being chairman of Heritage Oil & Gas Ltd (EYE *29 May), but the reality is that I was a mere non-executive director. What's more I left the board at the end of 1996 on restructuring of the company largely because I was fed up with the recirculation of incorrect old press cuttings suggesting that I thereby had some connection with Executive Outcomes. I never did, and it is sad to see that old chestnut resurrected in your columns. Nor was I leader of the Liberal Party in 1995 — had you not noticed someone called P. Ashdown?*

This is not serious enough to cause me to cancel my subscription to your splendid if sometimes inaccurate organ.

Yours etc,
LORD STEEL OF AIKWOOD,

House of Lords.

Non-lookalike



Before **After**

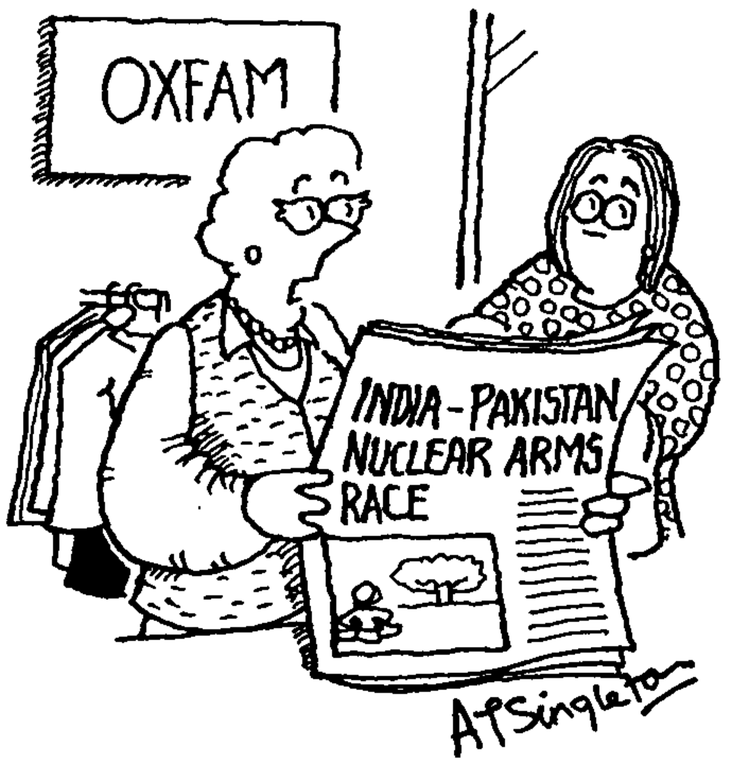
Sir,

Something fishy's going on at Birds Eye. Here is Cap'n Birds Eye as we all know him. But now look... Is he on Viagra? Or is it something in the fish fingers? I think we should be told.

Yours sincerely,
PENNY WAINWRIGHT,

Rawdon, Leeds.

Use of heroin shooting up
Huntingdon Town Crier



"It's the Third World Third World War!"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"I always used to put my right boot on first, and then obviously my right sock."
BARRY VENISON, ITV
(Oliver Davies)

"He [Ernie Els] has just got engaged, which is perhaps why he produced a 69 today."
TONY ADAMSON, Radio 5
(Paul Negri)

"We [Roger Norrington's orchestra] gave the first performance of Handel's Messiah on original instruments."
ROGER NORRINGTON, Radio 3
(Paul Gregory)

"There'll be no siestas in Madrid tonight."
KEVIN KEEGAN, ITV
(Richard Thomson)

"In life he was a living legend; in death, nothing has changed."
LIVE TV
(John Gammon)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

Letter From **Armageddon**

from Our Own Correspondent

INDIA and Pakistan, who have fought three wars since independence 51 years ago and have unresolved territorial and diplomatic disputes, are ruled by fundamentalist governments who do not comprehend what nuclear arsenals are all about. Nor do they have command or control systems to regulate them.

Having conducted 11 underground nuclear tests between them — five by India; six by Pakistan — both sides feel they possess the ultimate weapon to settle disputes. India wants to adopt a "pro-active" policy towards Pakistani interference in the northern, disputed state of Kashmir; Pakistan refuses to accept India's offer of a no-first use nuclear weapon agreement pending the Kashmir settlement.

Despite Pakistan's recent invitation to India to attend talks, both countries are arming their missiles with nuclear warheads. The Hindu bomb of the fragile coalition led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, the BJP of prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, is ranged against the Islamic bomb of the equally sectarian Pakistan Muslim League government of Nawaz Sharif. Little attention, however, has been paid to Chinese involvement in developing the Islamic bomb as this does not suit US business interests.

China's role should automatically invoke US sanctions, but this does not appeal to President Bill Clinton, who visits Beijing this month. Thus it is overlooked that Pakistan carried out a "cold test" of its nuclear capability in China in 1985.

Meanwhile the Hindu detonation — made in such secrecy it fooled US spy satellites and led to suspensions and an inquiry at the CIA, which has a $28bn budget but couldn't spot the bomb — was known only to a handful of BJP leaders and reportedly some from its umbrella organisation, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The defence minister and military chiefs were told only a day before the first round of tests on 11 May.

It was too much of a coincidence that *Organiser*, the RSS's monthly magazine, carried a cover story on nuclear affairs that appeared the very day India conducted its first round of three tests. Two further tests followed two days later. The secretive RSS, which has provided the BJP its top leadership, including prime minister Vajpayee, federal home minister Lal Kishen Advani and other senior government leaders, is opposed to Muslims. Since its inception 73 years ago it has organised arson and murderous attacks against them to prevent them from "sullying" Hindus.

Beset by bickering coalition partners, the BJP and RSS needed a quick fix. India's nuclear establishment was got the green light within days of the BJP taking office. Almost instantly the BJP got the biggest and quickest bang for the buck, the country's support and momentary silence on the political front.

After the test Advani and parliamentary affairs minister Madan Lal Khurana demanded that Pakistan now behave itself in south Asia. Khurana even invited Pakistan to state the time and place to fight a fourth, decisive war. Two weeks later Pakistan detonated six underground explosions on two separate days. Immediately the two sides were locked in their usual one-upmanship contest, declaring their blast was bigger.

Pakistan's nuclear capability is the product of a fundamentalist mindset which dates from India's first 1974 nuclear test. Then prime minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Benazir's dad, declared that Pakistanis would eat grass if they had to to produce the Islamic bomb. After Bhutto was overthrown by the Islamic General Zia, the nuclear programme passed to military control. The military hates India and new officers supposedly take an oath to avenge the loss of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971 with Indian help.

Supported by the military and the government, Pakistan's bomb was developed with Chinese help and a network, headed by Dr A.Q. Khan, that smuggled in components from abroad. This led to the riposte that has turned south Asia into the world's major flashpoint.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

"Of course, this isn't the first case I've come across of a man seeking sexual gratification from his vacuum cleaner," Public Safety Director Louis Napoletano told reporters in Long Branch, New Jersey, "but this guy obviously didn't know his model very well. If he had, he'd have known that right under where the hose attaches, there's a revolving blade for pushing the dust into the collection bag."

Napoletano was speaking the day after a fifty-one-year-old man had been rushed to the Monmouth Medical Center with a severed penis and severe blood loss. "When police officers responded to his 911 call,

they burst into his house and found him lying in a pool of blood. At first, he told them that he had cut himself shaving. Then he said someone had broken in and stabbed him in the crotch, but the vacuum cleaner was covered in blood, and one of the officers found the amputated tip of his penis in the dust bag, so it was pretty obvious what had happened.

"We got him to the medical center as soon as possible, and doctors tried to reattach the severed part, but without success. This morning, the man admitted to us that he'd got drunk while his wife was away, and had decided to seek sexual pleasure from the vacuum suction. It just goes to show, you should do what the manufacturers say: always read your appliance handbook before switching it on." *(Associated Press, 13/5/98. Spotter: Andy Davison)*

—●—

● In a Vienna hotel: "In case of fire, do your utmost to alarm the porter."

In a Greek tailor shop: "Order your summers suit. Because is big rush cunt, we will execute customers in strict rotation."

In a Hong Kong supermarket: "For your convenience, we recommend courteous, efficient self-service."

In a Hong Kong dentist: "Teeth extracted by the latest Methodists."

In a Bucharest hotel lobby: "The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret you will be unbearable."

In a Hong Kong tailor shop: "Ladies may have fits upstairs."

In a Roman clinic: "Specialist in women and other diseases."

In a hotel in an Austrian ski resort: "Not to perambulate the corridors in the hours of repose in the boots of ascension." *(Business translations quoted in The Toronto Globe and Mail, 15/4/98. Spotter: Brendan Joseph O'Byrne)*

—●—

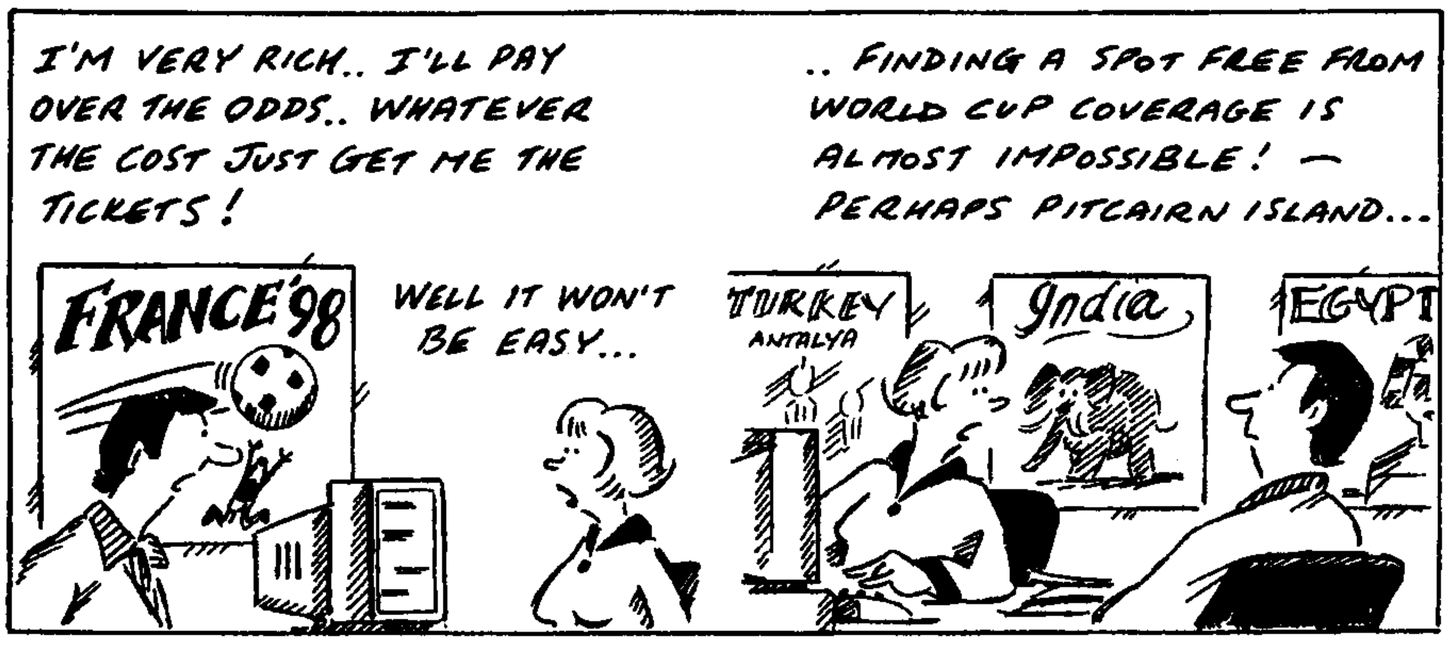
● *"Suganda Samity is no fly-by-night organisation," Ali Hossain angrily replied to reporters in Dhaka, after they had questioned his ethics. "We are a highly professional institution, and the sole purpose for our existence is to teach the ancient and honourable art of thieving to the younger generation."*

Committee member Ali Hossain was speaking on behalf of the newly-formed Suganda Samity association, created by the ten thousand professional thieves who operate in the Bangladesh capital. "We have already enrolled two thousand pupils in our training school, and we are teaching them how to master the basic skills of our profession — pickpocketing, forgery, and breaking and entering with light violence. We also run an intelligence service, so that domestic servants can give us inside information which will help us to rob their employers. In return, we give these informants a share of the proceeds from the burglary, because it is only right and proper that we treat them with honesty. However, hijackers cannot become members of our association, because their activities are anti-social." (The Kathmandu Post, 31/3/98. Spotter: Christine Everett)

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

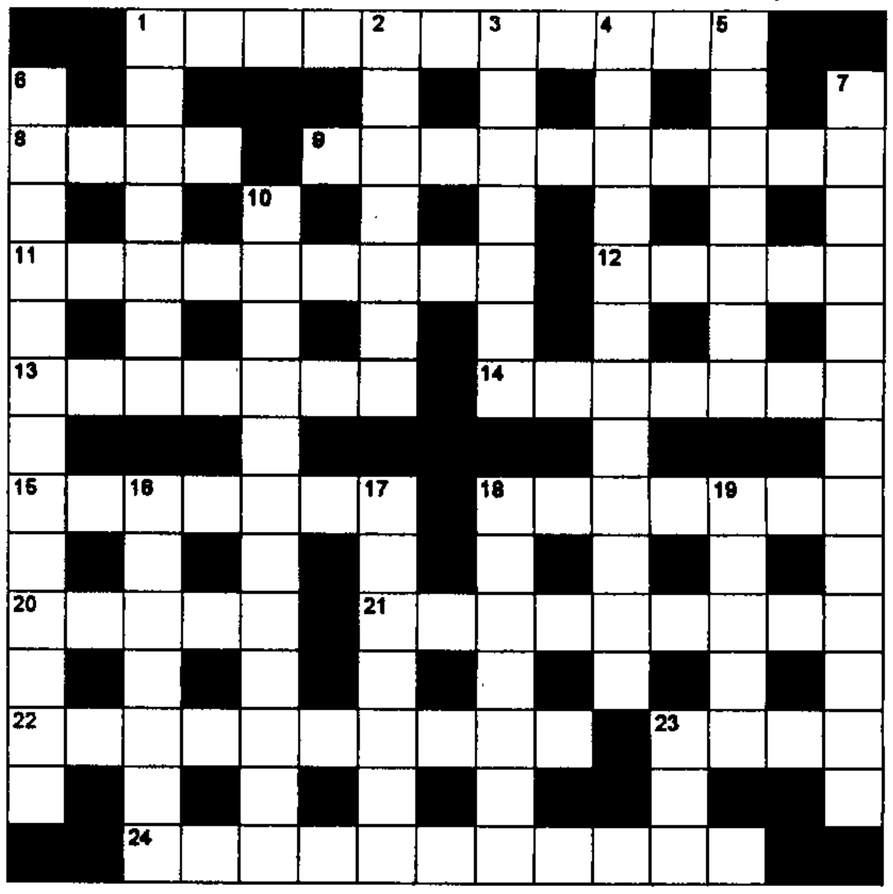
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


I'M VERY RICH.. I'LL PAY OVER THE ODDS.. WHATEVER THE COST JUST GET ME THE TICKETS!
.. FINDING A SPOT FREE FROM WORLD CUP COVERAGE IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE! — PERHAPS PITCAIRN ISLAND...
FRANCE'98
WELL IT WON'T BE EASY...
TURKEY
ANTALYA
India
EGYPT

EYE CROSSWORD 107

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Everybody, mug the competition (3,5,3)
8 Group you hear too much? (4)
9 Crazy reason given for shutting up shop? (3,2,5)
11 Was an aggressive manager, following Kelvin Mackenzie's tip to get into sad, sick mess (6,3)
12 Came together when penetrated by one's intended (5)
13 Exalted journalist a fruit (7)
14 Politician who's not arse? Impossible! (7)
15 Japs may break the retirement habit (7)
18 Charlie let off? Go on! (7)
20 Unstable, Stallone's character? (5)
21 Girl gets tits out outside for the Italian scorer (9)
22 Chirac and Kohl's positive responses to committee for getting news from the other side (5,5)
23 Information suppressing male agents (1-3)
24 Banally happy, having scored – like the bovine bounder? (4,3,4)

DOWN

1 Vehicle for the airing of hackneyed, right-wing opinions? (4-3)
2 Be an egg-producer in anticipation of the next lay? (7)
3 Expensive cars, exotic bloomers (7)
4 Former Al-Fayed spokesman chappie nuts for our boobs feature (with 1 ac. a rich potential source?) (12)
5 Not erect? Tip: breath heavily externally (7)
6 Dicky, in a mimicking way, produces another clichéd managerial quote (4,2,1,6)
7 What's close to an England player's heart? Enter his hotel – you'll see it's trashed (3,5,5)
10 Rash produced when Viagra led me astray embracing Young Conservative – not good (5-3-4)
16 One who espoused Aristotle: that is held by weirdo performer (6,1)
17 In Dallas US Southerners discover the truth: ... (4,3)
18 ... Savannah's right besieged by knockers, that is (7)
19 Carrie, we hear, married a phallic symbol (5)
23 Leave nothing but a sticky mess (3)

£100 prize to first solution opened on 19.6.98. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 106

Winner: D.C. GODFREY

ACROSS: 1 Slump 4 Civil List 9 Attaché 10 Nipples 11 Dianaballs 12 Soap 14 Old Bill 16 Attempt 17 Phallic 19 Defence 21 Kohl 22 Act of Union 24 Foliage 26 Papa Doc 27 Newshound 28 Roses.

DOWN: 1 So-and-so 2 Ultra 3 Peccadillo 4 Cue-ball 5 Vanilla 6 (see 13) 7 Isle of Man 8 Tosspot 13/6 Stiff upper lip 15 Deathblow 17 Poke fun 18 Cocteau 19 Dropped 20 Eunuchs 23 Indus 25 Ash.

ITV

Was Fayed Murdered?

A Special Investigation by Fullcrummy Productions

(Sinister music. Film of cars going down Park Lane at night)

Nicholas Owen *(for it is he)*: Millions of people all over the world love Mohamed Al-Fayed. But unknown to them there is strong evidence to believe that the most popular man in the world is no longer alive. And, what is more, he may well have been murdered by agents acting on behalf of the Royal Family and the British Government.

(Dramatic music. Film of cars outside Buckingham Palace. Close- up of policeman looking angry)

Owen: Tonight we look at that evidence and ask "Have the unanswered questions about Mohamed Fayed really been answered?"

(Film of bargain-hunters queuing up outside Harrods at the start of the sales. Cut to still photo of Fayed sitting in chair holding up copy of Punch)

Owen: We took this photograph to a French pathologist who specialises in looking at photographs of people who might be dead.

(Man in white coat appears holding up stethoscope to photograph)

Inspecteur Morgue: Bien sûr, Monsieur Fayed vive! Il n'est pas mort. Il est fou, certainement...

(A translator's voice begins speaking over the pathologist)

Voice over: In my opinion, this man is undoubtedly dead. Although his eyes are open, I can tell by the fact that he

Princess Fayed

is reading the magazine Punch that his brain must have stopped functioning several hours ago.

(More sinister music plays over film of cars driving around Knightsbridge at night. Cut to man holding brown envelope full of money, reading slowly from autocue)

Owen: This man has never spoken before, but tonight he gives his eyewitness account of the murder of Mohamed Al-Fayed.

Man: I was driving my cab along Knightsbridge and I saw the late Mr Fayed walking out of the swing doors of Harrods smoking a cigar. It was definitely him. I'd have known him anywhere. Just as he was about to call me over, a big Rolls Royce drew up in front of him with a Union Jack fluttering on the bonnet. The Queen got out wearing dark glasses and pointed a Kalashnikov rifle at Mr Fayed. "Hasta la vista, Baby" she said and filled him full of lead. I swear that's what I saw I didn't make it up honest.

(He begins to count money)

Owen: But perhaps the most damning evidence comes from Fayed himself who is speaking to us live in the studio. Mr Fayed, are you dead?

Fayed: Of course I fuggin' am. I was murdered by the fuggin' queen.

Owen: So, there you have it. Conclusive proof if proof were needed that ITV really shouldn't be allowed to make documentaries — and that my career is definitely dead.

(Death March plays over film of Owen weeping)

Continuity Announcer: A five-hour discussion of issues raised by this documentary will be shown immediately after the commercial break. Speakers in the studio will include espionage expert Nigel West, Rupert Allason, the former MP turned espionage expert, Sir Bernard Ingham, Professor Ben Pimlott and a number of experts from the Broadmoor College of Clinical Psychopathology who believe that they are Napoleon.

Coming Soon

Diana — The Truth

2.30 a.m. C4

INCREDIBLE documentary that puts forward the astonishing theory that there was no conspiracy to murder Diana and that she died because Fayed's driver got pissed and crashed into a wall. Controversially claims that MI6, Mossad and the Teletubbies were *not* involved and that Diana is still dead. Unbelievable.

"I'm not religious in the conventional sense — I go to church"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam: Lines on the decision to terminate Renault's popular Nicole and Papa advertising campaign

So. Farewell
Then.
Nicole and
Papa.

"Papa!" That was
Nicole's catchphrase.

"Nicole!" That was
Papa's.

Keith's mum
Hopes you have
Now made
Enough money

To buy a
Decent car.

E.J. Thribbio (17½ mpg)

Also. Farewell then
Stuart Higgins.
Editor of the
Sun.

I must admit that
Until today
I had never heard
Of you.

But according to Mr
Murdoch
You were
(And I quote)

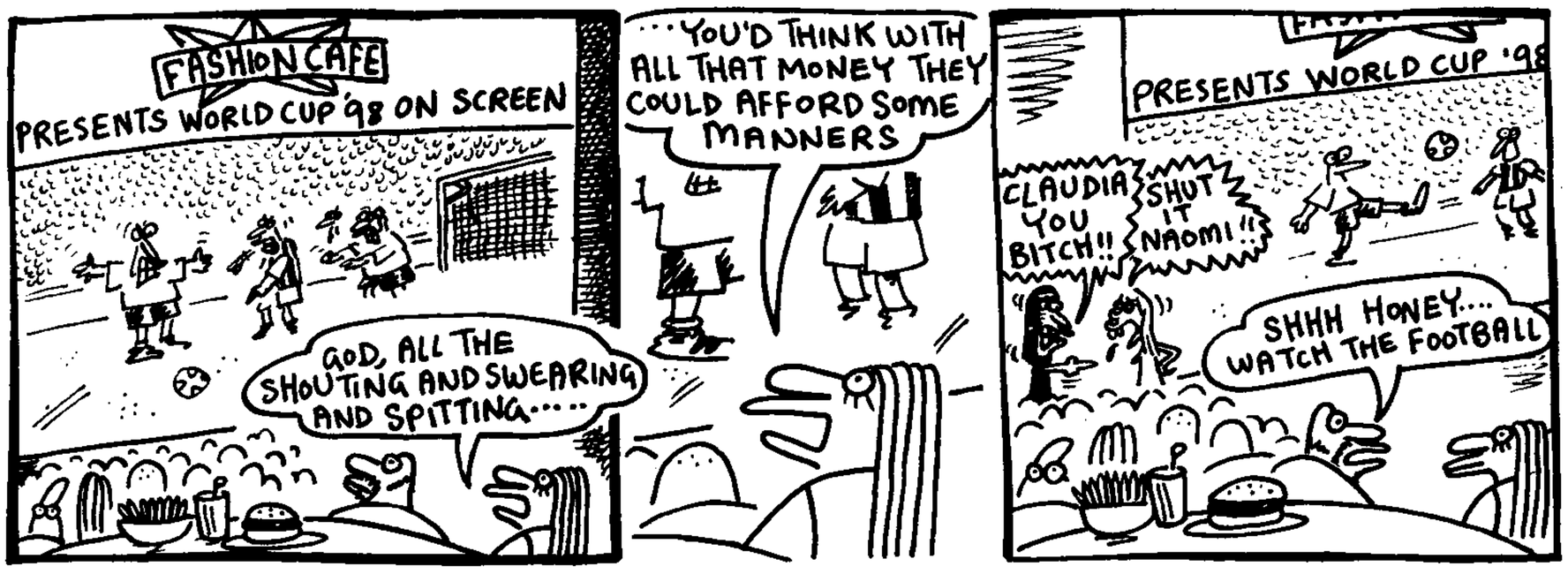
"A brilliant newspaper
Editor with a great
Future."

That is presumably why
He got rid of you.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


FASHION CAFE
PRESENTS WORLD CUP '98 ON SCREEN
GOD, ALL THE SHOUTING AND SWEARING AND SPITTING.....
...YOU'D THINK WITH ALL THAT MONEY THEY COULD AFFORD SOME MANNERS
PRESENTS WORLD CUP '98
CLAUDIA YOU BITCH!!
SHUT IT NAOMI!!
SHHH HONEY.... WATCH THE FOOTBALL

ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

There's only been one thing on all our minds this week, hasn't there?

Wherever I went in the parish, people were coming up to me and saying "Vicar, isn't it terrible? Why does God let these things happen?"

What they were talking about of course was the news that Gazza was to be sent home from the World Cup.

But, look! The fact of the matter is that if you're the boss, like Glenn Hoddle, you have to make tough decisions! If people aren't up to the job, you have to go, as I said to Chris Smith when I bumped into him in the cinema queue last week, where they are showing The Full Monty (which, incidentally, is just as inspiring the fifth time!).

The boss can't afford to look back to the past, keeping people in the team just because they are good friends or used to be good a few years ago!

As the Good Book says, "If your right foot offends you, cut it off and send it home!" *(New Labour Bible, St Paul to the Gazzonians, 8.13)*

That applies as much in my job as it does in football.

The only important thing is the team, not Mr Smith's feelings if he happens to be dropped from the PCC to spend more time writing his excellent books. (Copies of his latest, *Singing A New Song*, are available at a reduced price of 25p in the vestry.)

Also, it will not have escaped anyone's notice that Paul Gascoigne's real failing was to argue about the decision with Mr Hoddle. One of the lessons I learned very early in life was that, when someone in authority makes a decision you may not agree with, you don't start blubbing and whingeing, like some people in the parish I could name! (Mr Livingstone will know who I mean!) You just get on and do it!

So, that's the real message of Gazza. When a concerned, tough-minded Christian leader makes a difficult decision, people should give him their full support (and I'm sure Mrs Beckett

'Osanna in the 'ighest!

and Mr Strang will take this on board, if and when the time comes for them to be dropped!).

And talking of the World Cup, some of you may have missed my phone-in contribution to the "Meet Des Show" on Albion FM, our local radio station, last Wednesday night. A number of you have asked for a cassette of the show, which you unfortunately missed due to the fact that it was broadcast at 3 o'clock in the morning!

But I can do better than that! Mr Campbell, our editor, suggested that I include a transcript of the highlights in this newsletter! So 'ere we go!

DES: Great to have you on the show, Vicar! Who are you praying for in the Cup?

REV BLAIR: Blimey, Des, leave out the "vicar" stuff! I'm just an ordinary fan, eh, what?

DES: Great, Vic! So, are we going to win the group?

REV BLAIR *(MA, Oxon)*: Well, that's a right old tough one, Des, and no mistake! Lawks a mercy! I'm a bit of a geezer at heart!

DES: So, it's the Argies, is it, your reverence?

Rev Blair *(Fettes and St John's College)*: Strike a light, Des! I'd put a pony on that one!

DES: God bless, Vicar, for coming into the studio. And now, one of Tony's favourite records, Chas and Dave's World Cup '98 Pub Knees-Up.

[Note from Mr Campbell. We are very grateful to Albion FM for permission to reprint this interview. We would like to point out that the Vicar was not talking in a funny accent, as some of you have been suggesting. There was a problem with the microphone and anyone who says to the contrary will have to explain themselves to Mr Mandelson.]

Yours, Tony

YOU WRITE...

LETTER OF THE WEEK
(as dictated on Mr Campbell's ansaphone machine)

Dear Sir,

Although I am not stwictly one of your congwegation, I would just like to place on wecord my twemendous wespect and admiwation for everything you do. I am wetired these days, but I am always pwepared to help out in any wole you may choose to assign me. I have a good deal of expewience and would wequire no further remunewation than the occasional case of clawet at Chwistmas-time.

Yours faithfully,
Mr R. Jenkins, Hillhead Home
For Retired Gentlefolk.

The Editor reserves the right not to cut letters at all and to print them in their entirety, even if this means that other letters have to be omitted. Mr Mackinlay, for example, wrote in this week asking why so many letters in the newsletter are "sycophantic" to the Vicar. There was sadly no room for this. Nor will there be room next week or the week after. Alistair Campbell.

Notices

● Mr Blunkett, our Chairman of Governors, is happy to announce that the average class size at St Albion's Church School is now 39. This represents a significant decrease from last year's figure of 35, and shows that educational standards in the school, particularly in mathematics, are rising.

● **Mrs Short** would like parishioners NOT to give any money to the church's appeal fund for the starving in Sudan. She would like to thank the ladies in the OXFAM shop for their efforts but regrets that they have got the wrong end of the stick on this issue. Money is obviously the LAST thing you need in order to buy and deliver emergency aid to the suffering!

● **Mrs Mowlam's** garden party was an enormous success in getting the two Northern Irish communities in St. Albion together. She was not disappointed by the low turn out (0) which was the fault of the weather and NOT a problem with the invitations.

● **Mr Brown** and **Mr Dewar** will be absent from their posts on the PCC as they will apparently be attending various football matches over the next month. This is entirely a matter for them (the vicar does not go around telling PCC members what to do!), but if anyone in the parish feels that they have failed in their basic parochial duties, do please write to Tony at once.

Annual Report From Our Treasurer

Mr Brown writes:

I am happy to report that, thanks to my prudent stewardship, the St Albion's finances are in very healthy shape. We currently have a surplus of over £50 billion invested on deposit in our Superstandard Gold Zone High Interest Account at the Westminster Bank. Some of you have asked why we don't distribute this money to our various good causes, such as the poor, the old folk, St Albion's Primary School and the local cottage hospital. But that rather misses the point. If we spent all the money, we wouldn't have it any more! And then, where would we be? As the Bible says, "Lay up your treasure on earth *(that means 'save it'! T.B.)* for you never know when you may need it!" *(New Labour Bible Book of Tosh, 7-14)*
G.B.

From The Churchwarden

I am asking every member of the PCC to donate a week's salary as a "Millennium Donation" to the charity of my choice, namely the Millennium Children's Fund. Although these donations are entirely voluntary, any PCC member who fails to comply with this very reasonable request will have their salary docked by a commensurate amount, and the money will then be paid to the Fund. P.M.

To Remember In Your Prayers

Mr Dobson, who has lately been made the victim of a series of unprovoked verbal assaults by a stout, middle-aged lady of the parish, who shouts at him and tells him he is useless in a very loud and frightening voice. The thoughts of all of us go out to Frank at this difficult time.

Mrs Harman who is very upset that people consider her to be stupid. She says that she deliberately appears stupid sometimes because she is so intelligent. This is very clever of her but it may have given the wrong impression. Our thoughts go to Harriet too. T.B.

TAX, DRUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

by our Pop Staff **Marcus Taxmann**

MILLIONS of pounds were disappointed last night when they heard the news that the Rolling Stones, the World's greatest living Tax Dodgers, had cancelled the British leg of their worldwide "Money For Old Rope" tour.

Said a spokesman for the Inland Revenue: "It is appalling. We have been waiting for years to see the money live. We have been collecting all the Stones' records and we really wanted to hear the unique sound of the Stones' cash for ourselves."

Lord Jagger is 106.

A Doctor writes

AS A doctor I am often asked by patients, "What is your success rate at this operation?" The simple answer is: "It's none of your business."

What happens is that the doctor, or *Medicus Arrogantus Masonicus* (to use the full technical term) suffers from symptoms of extreme short-sightedness and fails to notice that he is useless at his job.

Normally nothing happens and the doctor can lead a healthy medical life.

However, in rare cases, an inspection of the doctor's medical records reveals that he is dangerous and life threatening and has to be removed immediately.

If you are worried about your doctor, you should seek a second opinion from your lawyer.

© *A Doctor 1998.*

The Dangers Of Genetic Engineering

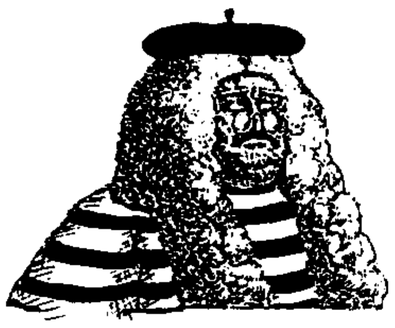
by Charles

IN AN article in today's *Daily Telegraph*, Prince Charles warns of the terrible consequences of genetic engineering. "Look at this Windsor family tree" he said, pointing to himself. "If you try and produce a superior type of human being thingie you end up with some frightful freak of nature with large ears and a plummy voice."

COURT CIRCULAR

Lord Bell of the Eighties (formerly Sir Tinker Bell) has announced the heraldic design for his new Coat of Arms. The coat will be held open, revealing a Membrum Virile Flashante, to reflect his early life around Hampstead.

The Coke of Arms will also feature a number of white lines (the traditional symbol of the advertising trade) with a twenty-pound note roulé protruding from a nose rampant. *(We've got the idea. Ed.)*



Let's Parler Franglais

No 94

Dans L'Inquest

Le Coroneur *(pour c'est lui)*: Et maintenant l'evidence de Monsieur Fayed.

(Tout le monde dans le court rit out loud)

Le Coroneur: Silence!

Fayed: Tous les anglais sont a bunch de fuggin' snobs especialement Madame Shand-Kydd. Quelle fuggin' bitch!

Le Coroneur: Monsieur Fayed, controllez votre self, s'il vous plait!

Fayed: Forgivez-moi, Monsieur le Judge — je suis only un common working class man as anyone ici can voir. Unlike Madame Fuggin' Toffee-Nez qui est une bad mother, une amie de la Queen Mother et une fuggin' snob.

Le Coroneur: Monsieur Fayed, vous avez dit ca already. Donnez votre evidence — so-called.

Fayed: C'est un plot de l'establishment anglais. C'est tout ici dans le Punch magazine!

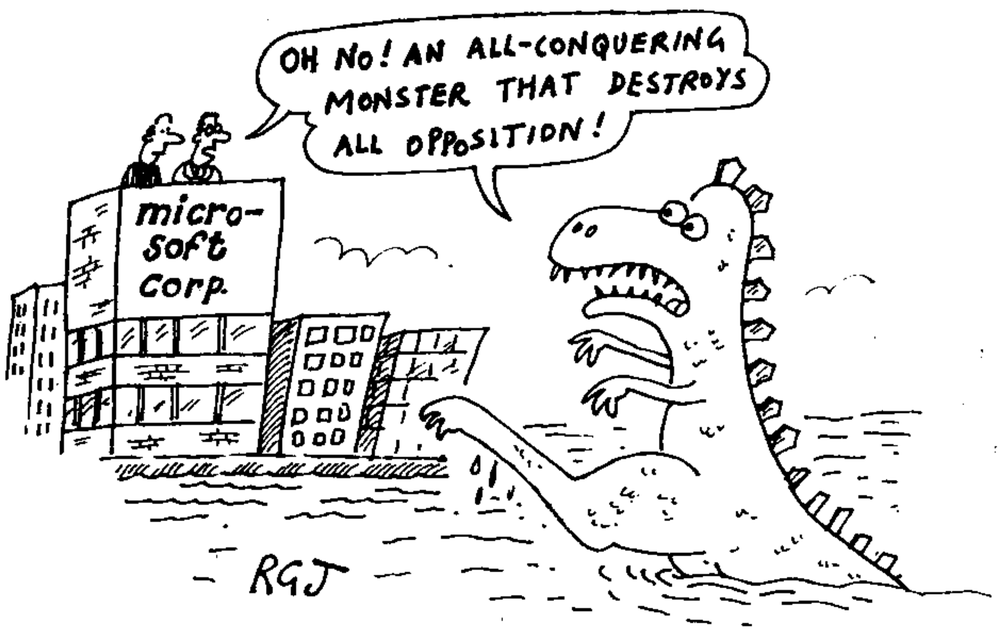
(Fayed exhibite un unsold copy de la humorous magazine Punch. Personne rit parce que Punch n'est pas assez good as it used to be).

Le Coroneur: Merci Monsieur Fayed. Ca suffit.

Fayed: Merci Monsieur Coroneur — et par le way voulez vous quelques emeralds? Tres valuable, seulement one owner, tombe off la derriere d'un fuggin' safe-deposit box. Nudgez-nudgez! Winkez-winkez!

Coroneur: Gendarmes! Arretez cet homme! Il est un fuggin' lunatic — pardon mon franglais...

© *Miles Kington 1961*



BLAIRZONE

Yes! It's Britain's Newest Fanzine

BLAIRZONE NOT TO SPLIT

Yes! It's official! Toni is *not* quitting the most successful band in the history of the UK. Although he has been seen hanging out with Chris Evans, Toni denies that he is bored and fed-up with being the most popular person ever. Toni also countered rumours of rifts in the group over his dictatorial style. "I am still a believer in Guy Power. And I am the Guy with the Power."

Nooze!

Gordon "Breadhead" Brown is at it again! The band's No. 2 is in trouble over money again! He's not spending any of it! Gordy is sitting on a pile of £40 billion — but won't part with a penny of it! Talk about being wild-ly prudent and mad-ly financially cautious!

Gordon's Top Tight-Wad Trax

Hey Nonspender!	Shirley Bassrate
No Money For Nothing	Dire Straits
Cool For Cuts	Financial Squeeze

Tone's Thoughts For Harmony In The Band

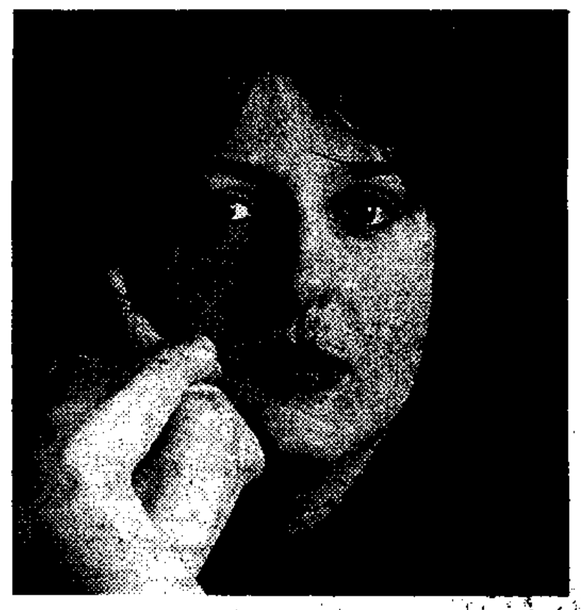
As the late great Joe Dolce put it in his unforgettable summer hit, "Shadduppayourface!" Think about it. He also said, "Whazza matter you gotta no respect why you looka so sad itza not so bad itza nice place eh shadduppayourface." Wise, wise words, Gordon.

Serialised Exclusively In The Sunday Times

JULIE

The People's Columnist

by The Late Diana, Princess of Wales



SHE began as a shy, gauche young girl with no visible talents, reluctantly entering the media spotlight as a writer on the New Musical Express.

But it was her marriage in 1981 to the glamorous Prince of Pop Tony Parsons which first catapulted her to world fame.

It seemed a fairytale marriage. Julie, with her winsome smile and leather wedding dress. Tony, with his white Ford Transit Van with leopard-skin accessories.

For a few years she could do no wrong. The world was at her feet. Columns, articles, TV appearances, books, plays, nothing was beyond her genius.

And how people loved her! Ordinary people like newspaper editors adored her.

It was said at one time that her picture on the front of a newspaper was enough to guarantee millions of sales for all the other newspapers.

But then rumours began to circulate that Julie was desperately unhappy.

She developed a severe eating disorder, wolfing huge plates of tiramisu and sun-dried polenta in the Groucho Club.

Julie Bullshit

And then the affairs began, often with the most unsuitable partners. She even gave a notorious TV interview in which she confessed to having slept with a woman on the Guardian.

But her public adored her all the more. In spite of everything. Perhaps because of everything.

The most famous woman in the world was at the height of her beauty, compassion and power. The Age of Julie had begun. As she told her confidante Lyn Barber in an interview *(cont. p. 94)*

The official wedding photograph

On Other Pages

The Julie Burchill Tour of London — all the places associated with Julie's short, romantic life — the Groucho Club, the remainder book-shop, the Modern Review offices, the Groucho Club.

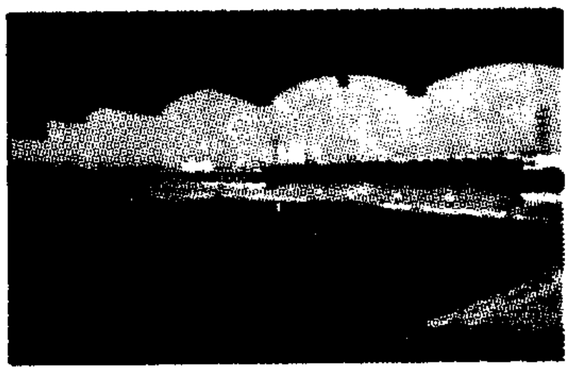
LIKE OTHER ROCK STARS, I FIRST STARTED USING IT TO EXPAND MY MIND IN A SEARCH FOR ENLIGHTENMENT AND WISDOM BUT I DIDN'T REALISE THE DANGERS...
THE TROUBLE IS, WHEN YOU'RE ON IT, THE HIGHER YOU GET THE GREATER THE RISK THAT YOU'LL LOSE CONTROL AND COME A CROPPER...
I DIDN'T WANT TO END UP IN A SPECIAL CLINIC HAVING DONE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO MYSELF.
SO YOU DON'T USE IT ANYMORE?
NOT AFTER KEITH RICHARDS' ACCIDENT, NO WAY. JOHNSON GETS MY BOOKS DOWN FOR ME NOW.

Six to Watch

An Exclusive Private Eye Guide To The Six Most Exciting Stadiums In The World Cup.

Here They Are, The France '98 Favourites!

1. Stade des Bâtards, Depardieu
Capacity: 98,000. Measurements 438m x 372m. Home Team: Inter Depardieu. Hosting: The Group of Death (J).



2. Stade de Baguette, Croque-le-Monsieur
Capacity: 117,000. Measurements 752mm x 432cm. Home Team: The Croque-le-Monsieur Cowboys. Hosting: The Group of Fear (D).

3. Stade de Mickey Mouse, Eurodisney
Capacity: 7 million. Measurements 38km x 478km. Home Team: The Marnes-Les-Vallées Queue Jumpers. Hosting: The Group of Salesmen From the Digicom '98 Conference.

4. Stade de Kronenberg 1664 (That's enough stadia. Ed.)

GASCOIGNE'S COMING HOME

Six World Cup Classic Goals

1. 1914.
Germany vs England
Lieutenant Bertie Frobisher Smythe (Eton Rifles) scores in extra time on Christmas Day beating the German keeper before being court martialled for cowardice and *(That's enough football. Ed.)*

WORLD CUP QUIZ

Just answer a couple of simple question and you could win two tickets to see the World Cup Live (on television in the offices of Private Eye).

1. Should Gazza be dropped from the headlines after a career spent at the very top of the front pages?
2. Should Gazza be relagated to the back pages just because some people think he is unfit to be the main news story?
3. Should Sheringham be given his chance to appear on the front of the tabloids looking an idiot?

Put your answers on a postcard and send to: World cup Quiz, c/o The Gnome Kebab House, Soho, W1.

THE TOP SIX WORLD PULL-OUT GUIDES TO FRANCE '98

1. Gola!
Plucky Brazilian guide with flair, imagination and talent.

2. Shüt!
Solid German publication with workmanlike precision that will get it through to the

3. N'Gola!
Little known Nigerian supplement that could pull some surprises if and when it comes out.

4. Coca!
Unpredictable Columbian effort that comes with free blow football straw and "crazy soccer powder!".

5. Daily Mirror
World Cup '98 Guide. Lacklustre and predictable, this British attempt may well fall apart during the first round. (That's enough guides. Ed.)

YOBS at the WORLD CUP
We'll miss Gazza
Yeah but he's here in spirit
..one Alan Shearer, there's only one Alan Shearer, one Alan Shearer, there's..
Oi do you Engleez know no other songs
Yeah sure.. one David Beckham there's only one David Beckham... one...
Aye mate, wanna hear a joke?
If it eez better than your songs
What do you get if a Dutchman, a German and an Englishman are in the same bar?
Don't know
A fight!!!

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No. 94: A New Form of Broadly Non-Religious Worship For Use At School Assemblies (as approved by the Synod of the Church of England)

Headteacher *(for it is he or she)*: Good morning, everyone. I said good morning, everyone!

(All may here make some form of inarticulate response)

Headteacher: We're now going to have our reading from something really important to give us a good start to the school day *(or they may use some similar words)*.

The Reading

Sixth Former: Today's reading is from The Little Book of Calm. "If you look at the sky and it is blue, it makes you feel tranquil. If you look at the grass and it is green, it makes you feel peaceful. If you look at a plastic duck and it is yellow, it makes you feel good inside." Here ends the reading.

Headteacher: Thank you, Tracy *(or he may say Wong or Aswan)*. Let's put our hands together to show how much we enjoyed the reading. And now it's time for a piece of music.

(Here he may play a tape of some suitable piece of popular music, as it may be Mr Michael Jackson's "We Are The World" or it may be Baddiel and Newman's "Three Lions On A Shirt")

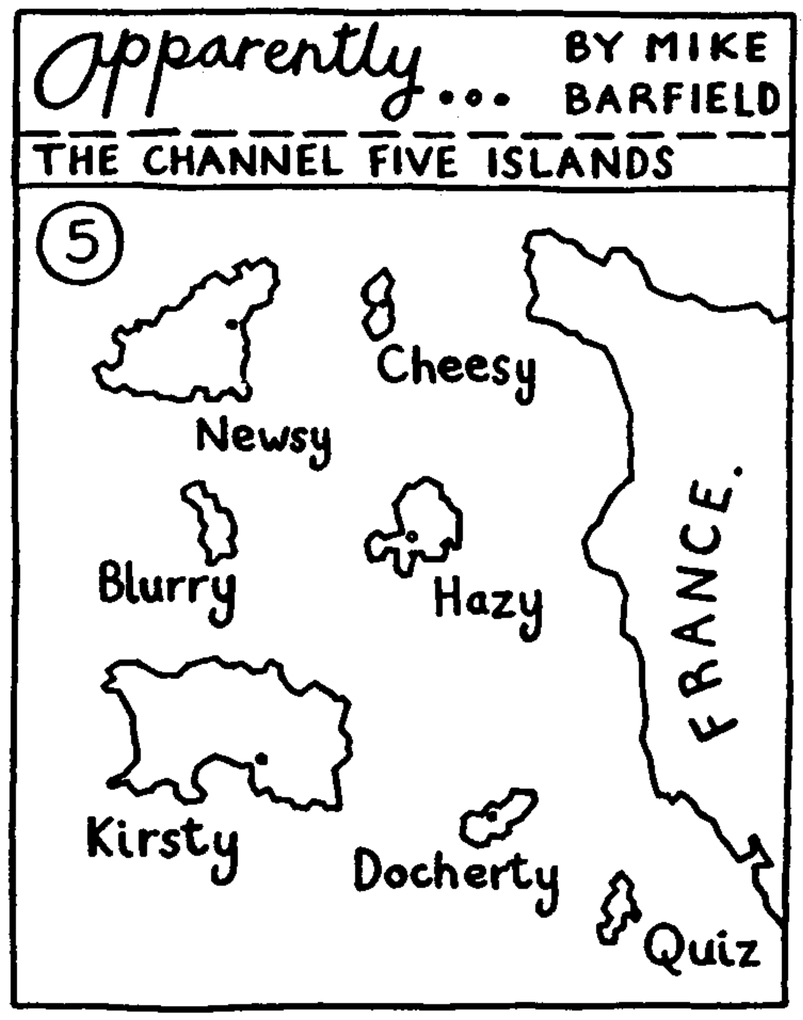
Headteacher: I enjoyed that, didn't you?

All: No, it was crap *(or some similar expression of disapproval)*.

Headteacher: And now, let us all stay quiet for a minute, close our eyes and think about all the people in Sudan *(or he may say Rwanda, Kosovo or wherever in the world there may have been a disaster reported on that morning's GMTV)*. And now the dismissal...

(Here may be named those pupils who have been excluded for serious breaches of school rules, including murder, armed robbery, rape and drug smuggling. The students shall then proceed to their learning environment — or it may be the local McDonald's)

© SPCK (Society for the Prevention of Christian Knowledge)



Outline plans to create a new entrance and re-design the lay-out of the museum to make it more disabled and elderly had been given the green light.

Mid-Devon Gazette

6.30 Private Passions Michael Berkeley's is Bernard MacLaverty.

Grauniad Guide

50 Mills and Boob books, £5

Bristol Evening Post

Harry Enfield's **Bores**
Drawn by Michael Heath
No. 38 World Cup Bore

"Free Lions onya shirt is comin' 'ome EENKLAN' is comin' 'ome under the 'od mind jew he shouldna ditched GAZZA Chris Evanza caant zizfawlt EENKLAN! Jools Reeemay stiw cleemin' in the Braziwwian trop'y room David Baddeawza caant I reckon we're gonna do it vis time EENKLAN! pinnin me 'opes on SHEEER-RER! them krautza buncha caants big screen zgreat blokes only birds av to faggorv so vey don't keep pizzin us off sayin' 'ow come ee's offside wot's offside anyway?' an 'which one's goin' aat wiv Posh Spice ooh anty gotta lovely bum?' EENKLAN! FOOBAW'S COMIN' 'OME! I met Nick 'Ancock in the bogs 'ere once eeza cant I woz in the Cambwige footloits wivvim..."

A GRAVE CRISIS

This morning the people of Britain awoke to learn that their worst fears had been realised. For days the rumours have been flying thick and fast. But today it was finally confirmed that it was all too true. Mrs Geri Halliwell, better known to Times readers as "Ginger" Spice (see Spice Girls Go Sky-High, Sky 2, 9pm tonight) has decided to abandon the most successful popular singing group of all time. She is to strike out on her own in the hopes of establishing a solo career.

At this moment, it is unclear what has motivated Ms Halliwell to arrive at this momentous decision. Reliable sources close to the group suggest that there have recently been signs of dissension among the celebrated quintet over such matters as style, presentation and the group's future marketing strategy.

Alternatively, as Lord Rees-Mogg argues persuasively on the adjacent page, the resignation of Ms Halliwell may be seen as an inevitable corollary of the 20th Century's insatiable thirst for change, variety and instant gratification.

Certainly it is true that the pressures attendant on the life of a modern celebrity are such that it is almost impossible for a group of creative people to continue to work harmoniously together for any length of time.

Indeed, the path of popular music is strewn with casualties of this fearsome destiny. One thinks, for instance, of the departure of Miss Diana Ross from the Supremes in 1965. Or, more recently, that of Mr Robbie, who deserted his colleagues in the Take That. And there have been many more (see Sky's History of Pop, 9.30pm, Sky 1).

All of which makes it the more commendable that Lord Jagger, Mr Keith Richards and Mr Charles Watts have remained a cohesive entity through all the vicissitudes of the past 50 years, and remain to this day beacons of hope and an example of stability, loyalty and selfless dedication to a younger generation so sadly lacking in such role models.

Whatever reassurances we may be offered by the now sadly depleted Spice Girl quartet, the tragic fact remains that the group now face a future of terminal decline. In recent years we have become accustomed to the spectacle of our greatest national institutions falling into desuetude. The Royal Family, the Church of England, Rolls Royce, the BBC (see Sky Movies for latest premieres), have all been found wanting when faced by the peculiar challenges presented by this perilous transition to a new millennium.

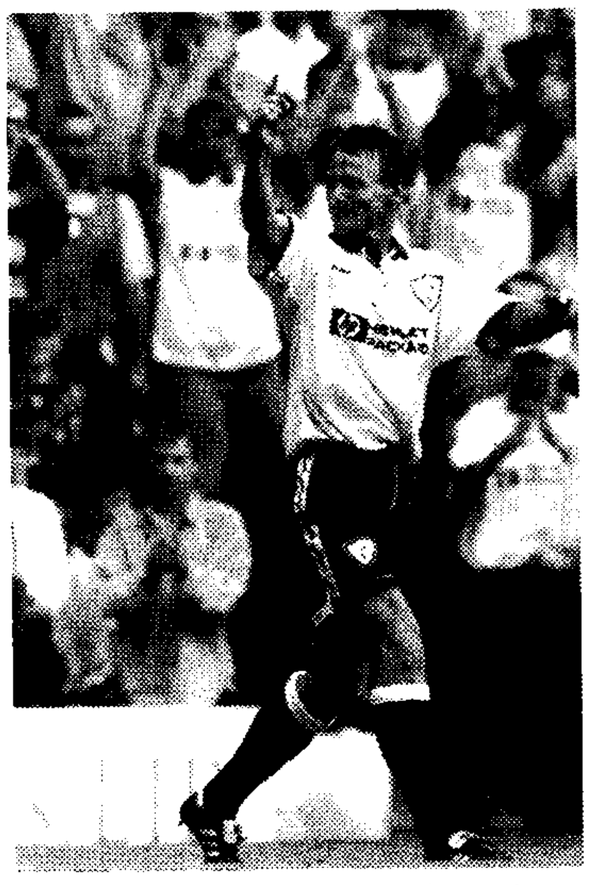
And now another great institution crumbles. The world, we may confidently predict, will never be the same again.

Russia Faces Collapse **14**
Japan Faces Collapse . **15**
Millions Dead In Earthquake **16**

WORLD CUP COMPETITION

SPOT THE BOTTLE

All you have to do is put a cross where you think Teddy Sherringham has hidden his bottle (or bottles) of lager. Mark it with a simple XXXX to win a night out in a Portuguese karaoke bar with the blonde totty of your choice and twenty Players (most of whom are in the England squad).



Send to: "Spot the Hoddle Competition", Bottle *(shurely 'Bootle'? Ed)*, Lancs. Competition closes June 4th.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Tragedy in the making

From the Archbishop of Canterbury and Others

Sir, We write, as the spiritual leaders of the nation, to protest at the dropping of Mr Paul Gascoigne from the England Squad. Even at this eleventh hour we appeal to Mr Glenn Hoddle, as a fellow Christian, to think again, and to remember the words of Our Lord that "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over the 21 who turn up sober for their training sessions."

We remain, sir, your obedient servants,
†GEORGE CANTONA
†TERRY ELY
†LES GRIMSBY
†DAVE MACCLESFIELD
†SID GUILDFORD
†KEVIN WORKSOP
Church House, London.

Exemplary Courage

From Rt Hon William Hague MP

Sir, The nation must commend the courage of Glenn Hoddle in taking this courageous decision to drop the legendary Mr Gascoigne from his World Cup team. Such courage is the mark of true leadership, as I myself have shown by my fearless decision to drop Steve "Dozza" Dorrell from my own squad.

Yours sincerely,
WILLIAM HAGUE,
House of Commons.

Cultural Crisis

From Ms Deirdre Spart

Sir, It is sickeningly typical of the macho footballing culture that the so-called footballer Gazza should be dropped, not for his self-confessed and well-attested acts of violence against women, ie his estranged partner Sheryl, but for the comparatively minor offence of drinking alcohol and thus letting down his exclusively male team-mates. Once again proving that male solidarity is considered a more important issue than, er,

Yours sincerely,
D. SPART (Ms),
Hackney and Shoreditch Feminists Against the Countryside, London, E94.

Moore On

From the Editor of the Daily Telegraph

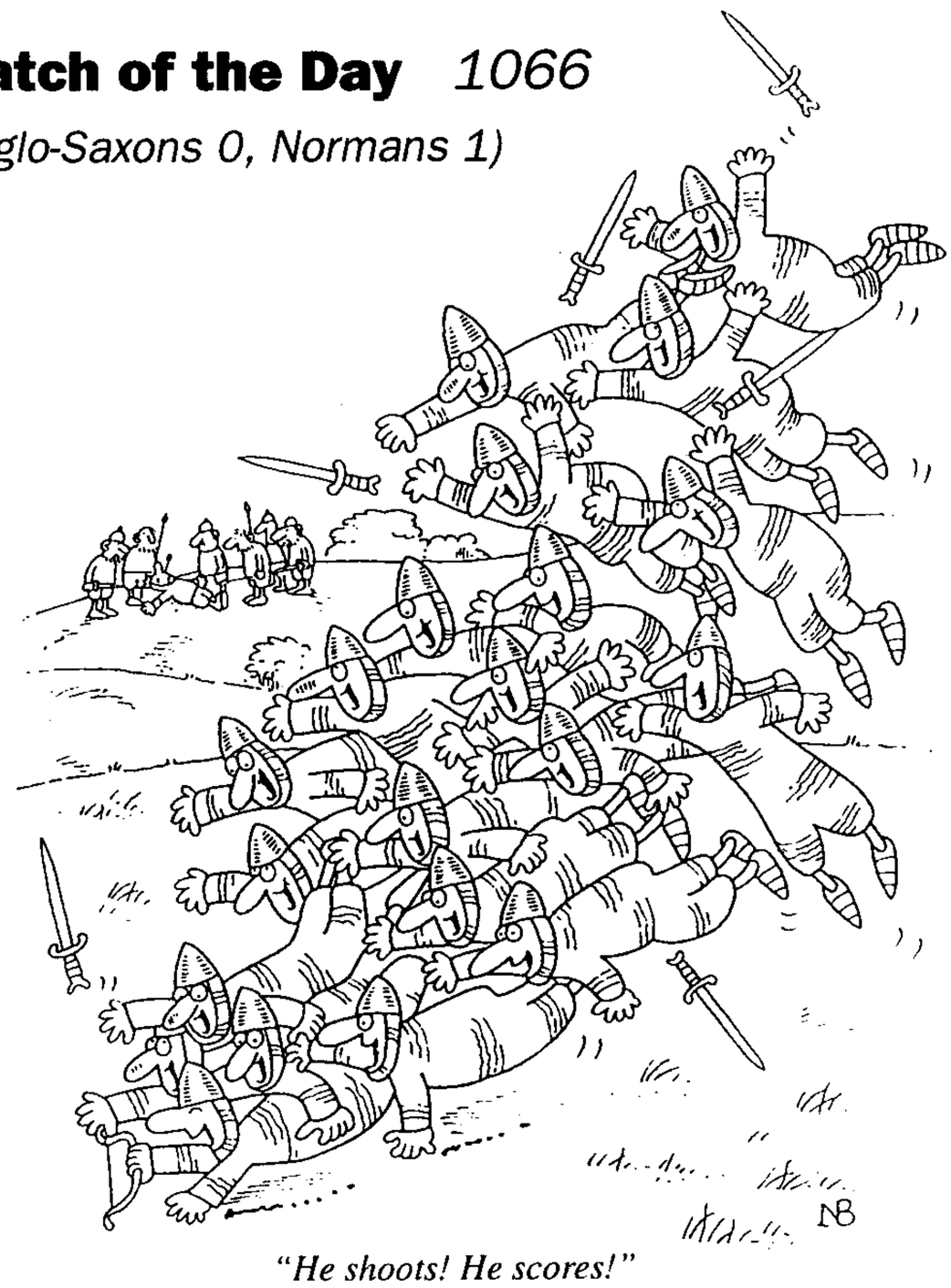
Sir, I would like to deplore in the strongest possible terms the decision to drop Mr Bamber Gascoigne, the well-known Old Etonian, in favour of Mr Jeremy Paxman.

This demotion of "Gazza" in favour of "Pazza" (to adopt the hideous vernacular of the young) can only be seen as further evidence of the complete collapse of standards in Britain today.

Yours sincerely,
CHARLES MOORE,
Out of Touch,
The Old Rectory, East Sussex.

Match of the Day *1066*

(Anglo-Saxons 0, Normans 1)



"He shoots! He scores!"

DIARY

AN AUDIENCE WITH ROD STEWART

(Rod enters. Applause. More applause. Rod turns round and wiggles his bottom at the audience. Standing ovation)

Rod: Woooh! *(Pause)* Nah, bollocks!

Audience: Hahahahahahahaha!

Rod: Wooh! Any ques-tee-o-nez, nah? Make it all above board, will ya?! Nah. Bollocks!

Audience: Hahahahahahahahahaha!

Rod: Me old mate, the late, great Ronnie Wood! The legendary Woody! Rock 'n' roll! Nah! Yeah, mate?

Woody: Burp! Gorra bidda wind, Rod! Hahahahaha!

Audience: Hahahahahahahahaha.

(Wolf whistles)

Woody: Burp! Nah, Rod, wodda wonnid to arse wuz — air ye doin, mate?

Rod: Couldn't arf do wiv a right good shaggin', mate! Nah! Bollocks!

(Raucous laughter. Standing ovation)

Rod: Here's a song written by me old mate wossisname — the crafty old shagger!!! Nah!

Ah m say-lin
Ah m say-lin
Harm gen crass d seey
Ah m say-lin
Starmy wart tuz
T b wiv yer
T be freey
Ah m flar-yin
Ah m flar-yin
Harm gen crass d seey

(Applause. More applause. Cheers. Catcalls)

Rod: Wooh! Yeah! Anyone gorra quessie for me? Yeah — the bird in the third row with the nice tits! Ha! Ha! You smooth-talkin' ladykiller, Rod, you! Nah!

(Laughter. Applause)

Ulrika Jonsson: Rod...

Rod: Hi, darlin'!

Audience: Hahahahahahahaha!

Ulrika Jonsson: Rod, what's the most fun you've ever had ever in the whole of your life in the entire history of the world bar none?

Rod: Can't beat a good shaggin', love! Nah, seerzly, lez think, I dunno, I carn answer that, nah —

Woody: You old goat, Rod, mate!!

(Laughter. Applause)

Rod: Down boy! Hahahaha! Nah! Great mate — ladies and gentleman — the legendary Woody!

(Applause)

Rod: Please wowcum — Baby Spice!

(Applause)

Rod *(singing)*: Cumarn angel ma harse on far

Baby Spice *(singing)*: En doan denar yermar desaar

Rod: Spread y wins and lemme carm insaard

Both: Tonaarght's the naarght!
Tonaarght's the naarght!
Sgonnabe yallraaaaght!
Tonaarght's the naarght!
Tonaarght's the naarght!

Rod: Wooh!

(Standing ovation. Catcalls)

Sings: Way kup Mageh ar thing
Ar gos umfin ter say chew
Slay Setember an ah
Really shoobe backa skoo

(Applause. Yells. Catcalls)

Desmond Lynam: Rod, despite all your success, you've managed to remain an ordinary bloke with both feet firmly on the ground. How d'you manage it?

Rod: I shag the wife somethin' rotten! Hahahaha! Wicked! Nah, seerzly, I'm a normal bloke, like my birds, like a glass or six of the old boozey-woozey...

Woody: Make mine a pint, Rod! Hahahaha!

(Audience cheers and laughter)

Rod: The legendary Mister Ronnie Wood, Ladies and Gentlemen! Nah, but we live a normal life, go darn the pub. Well, we don't actually go darn the pub, nah, we get the landlord to dismantle the pub, bring it to our place in a container lorry and reassemble it at our place, just for the sake of convenience, know what I mean? Nah. Here's one yer might recognise. Cheers.

Rod *(sings)*: Dooyer thin Karm sek see
Just ree chout an tarch me
Carmon baby lair me know

(Wiggles bottom. Applause, more applause)

Rod: Bollocks! Hahahahahaha! Ta-ra! See you darn the boozer! Hahahahaha! Classic!

(Audience rise to their feet, cheering and clapping. Camera pans round celebrity audience of Rod's contemporaries, all swaying in rough time to the beat, including Alan Freeman, Jimmy Savile, Angela Rippon, Douglas Hurd, Janet Street-Porter, Quintin Hailsham, Kenneth Kendall and Penelope Keith)

"I'm sure it was the Viagra that killed him"

ADVERTISEMENT

In This Week's Spectacularlyboring

Diary by *Ginger Spice*
Why Francis Maude is a Genius
by *Bruce Anderson*
Paul Johnson on The Meaning of Pentecost
Petronella Wyatt Meets Herself
Whither the Pacific Rim After Suharto?
by *Francis Maude*
Troubled Times At Morgan Kleinwort
by *Christopher Fildes*
Is Francis Maude As Clever As Me?
by *Frank Johnson*

Plus cartoons by Heath, Heath and Heath

Literary Review

Get yer titles out for the lads

SUMMER READING

ONLY the second week in June, the World Cup is barely upon us, but already the preliminary skirmishes in the sporting sex war show every sign of blowing up into a full-scale conflict.

Predictably enough, in the scintillating post-modern environment we inhabit, there's scope for a certain amount of inversion of traditional attitudes. Thus, along with blokes recasting their memories of 1966 and sour-faced females protesting boredom, you have traitorous Sally Jockstraps appraising Shearer's legs *and* bemused public school boys complaining that they always preferred rugger anyway.

Equally predictably, this continuing rumpus has transferred itself to the bookshops, which are crammed with stuff that is either about football or defiantly *not* about football. Or sometimes, oddly enough, a combination of the two. So Nicholas Royle's anthology of new writing for the World Cup, *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (Sceptre £6.99), contains an absolutely obligatory piece by Maureen Freely entitled "Where I Go When You're Watching The World Cup."

Going back to the lads, the bloke soccer book is undoubtedly one of the most dreary publishing phenomena since magic realism. Worse, in that it took some irretrievably dim sub-genres — the biographies and autobiographies of 25 year-olds whose lives to date have been spent kicking a ball — refurbished them and then added some variants just for good measure. Leaving aside the ghost-written encomia of Shearer, Beckham *et al*, there are three main ways of making a name for yourself as a male soccer writer.

One is the egg-head route, exemplified by Simon Kuper's *Perfect Pitch* volumes (Headline Review, £7.99), in which serious types such as Blake Morrison, Harry Ritchie and D.J. Taylor can be found maundering on about their lost childhoods, and the clump of boot on leather is the equivalent of Proust's madeleine biscuit.

Number two is the yob route, in which beetle-browed "reformed" soccer hooligans (prime examples are a couple of frightening bone-heads called the Brimson brothers) mutter darkly about the evils of soccer violence while providing lavish recapitulations of the fucking good kicking they gave someone in 1983. But perhaps the most lucrative line of all is the egg-head pretending to be a yob. At its best this turns out books like Colin Shindler's *Manchester United Ruined My Life* (Headline Review, £14.99), a decent-ish memoir of a Manchester childhood systematically warped by the larky dissimulation of the title.

At its worst it fathers rubbish like John King's *England Away* — more soccer violence, whose voyeuristic jollies are supposedly glozed over by some (actually non-existent) irony. Remember Richard Allen's *Skinhead* books from a quarter of a century ago? Well, John King is Allen's spiritual heir, only publishers being what they are now he appears beneath the highly respectable covers of Jonathan Cape.

"T.V. Licensing? I'm giving you a final reminder I haven't paid my licence"

Meanwhile, what are the ladies up to? Why, the ladies are busy filling Waterstone's with books that *aren't* about football. Books like Dea Birkett and Sara Wheeler's *Amazonian: The Penguin Book of Women's New Travel Writing* (£7.99). And what is women's new travel writing? According to the introduction, it's about "crossing frontiers, challenging literary territories, taking risks". Taking *risks* did somebody say? In fact, *Amazonian*'s most pronounced characteristic is a tendency a) to supply pieces which are not recognisably about travel (hence the "new" of the title, presumably); and b) to witter. Suzanne Moore goes on about working in a bar in Miami and taking lots of drugs (yawn). Elisa Segrave writes about a not terribly interesting old lady she knew in Majorca. Kate Pullinger drones about her time as a visiting fellow at a Cambridge college (yes, I *know*, but this is "new travel writing" buster!) The unintentionally hilarious wanders all over the place, most notably in a piece by Lucretia Stewart, who, arriving at Pnomh Penh airport to be chauffeured away by — well, I never did — King Sihanouk's granddaughter, finds the latter's presence "an additional, unwelcome complication". Oh, well.

The problem, of course, is that many of the people on display here simply don't cut it as stylists. Move on to Shena Mackay's account of a journey in Pakistan, with its rapt descriptions of "Liquorice-Allsort orange" hoopoes parading on a lawn or rival kite-flyers "sugaring" their strings with powdered glass, and you can see what new women's travel-writing might be like. The same goes for Lesley Downer's piece about a Ghanaian love affair. The rest, though, is on the same level as Colin Shindler pretending that he thought the assassination of Bobby Kennedy had something to do with the Manchester City defender of that name. Returning to Maureen Freely's *Where I Go When You're Watching The World Cup*, I can tell you one thing about the venue, darlings — it won't be a bookshop.

HIGH LIFE

■ TRAVEL hacks on a four-day, don't-mention-the-war freebie to Lebanon courtesy of British Airways were irritated when one of their number held up departure because of a problem with his passport.

Representatives of the *Times*, the *Mail on Sunday*, PA, *Sunday Business*, *Hello!* and fellow free-loaders from the regions had to wait at check-in because the writer commissioned by BA's in-flight magazine *High Life* had not realised that it is A Bad Idea to try to enter Lebanon, or any Arab country, with a passport full of Israeli stamps.

Fortunately, at short notice BA and passport officials were able to arrange an emergency temporary passport, minus offending visas, for Gerald Kaufman MP, former shadow foreign secretary and expert on Middle Eastern affairs.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

■ THIS year's Prom commissions promise the usual range from the atonally dreary to the dissonantly banal. Moreover, the chosen composers seem determined to discourage us to judge by their comments in the programme.

Kalevi Ano writes of his premiere *Rejoicing Of The Deep Waters* that: "It's a nice piece but in a way it's ghastly as well... full of emptiness, desolate." Then the ever green Michael Berkeley confesses of his new work *The Garden of Earthly Delights*: "What fascinates me is the leap from imagined ideas to real ones, and the terror that involves."

Thomas Ades, meanwhile, seems to have composed some kind of burglar alarm. Of his work *These Premises Are Alarmed* he writes: "Any new building needs adequate security."

WORLD OF WHINE

■ WINE author Alice King caused a stink in Coles restaurant, Marlborough, recently when she sent back wine and then wrote about the experience in the nationals.

She neglected to mention the large amount of wine she and her party had consumed that evening (*Eye* 950), but told local reporters: "It is unacceptable to sell out of condition wine."

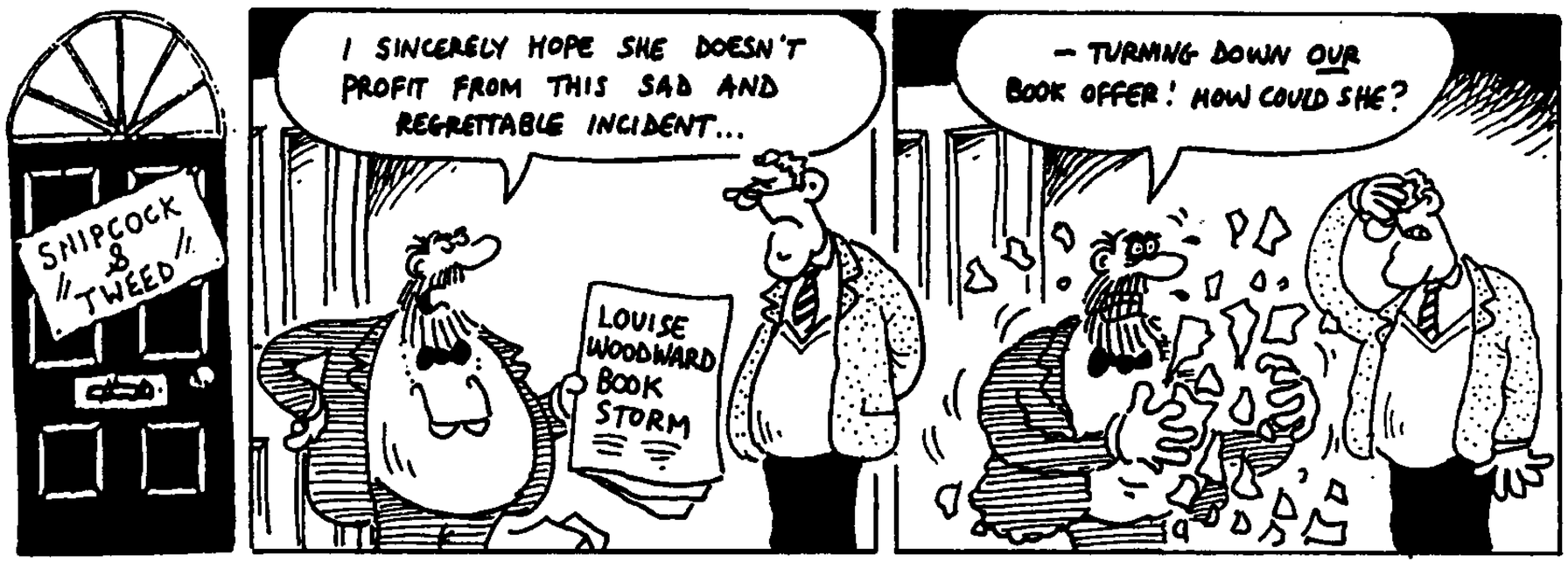
The comments were not well received by some of King's neighbour's in Berkshire, who recall the case of the Hungerford Wine Company, which was owned by Nick Davies, King's husband. This was a high profile en primeur specialist, selling claret by direct mail and claiming to be one of the top five firms in Britain in the 80s.

The company went into voluntary liquidation in November 1993 leaving its customers £1.5m worse off. So rather than being sold "out of condition wine" they were sold no wine at all.

LIBRARY NEWS

■ MORE cost-cutting from the immensely wealthy Corporation of London which, despite overflowing coffers, is requiring its libraries to reduce their budgets by a further £68,000.

The cuts will be achieved by painful reductions in budgets for materials and conservation, according to a memo from the assistant director of libraries.


SNIPCOCK & TWEED
I SINCERELY HOPE SHE DOESN'T PROFIT FROM THIS SAD AND REGRETTABLE INCIDENT...
LOUISE WOODWARD BOOK STORM
— TURNING DOWN OUR BOOK OFFER! HOW COULD SHE?

footnotes

THE SECRET POLICEMAN BALLS-UP

Something like the real story is beginning to seep out at the public inquiry into the 1993 racist murder of Stephen Lawrence.

Within hours of the murder, the police were inundated with information that the murderers were a racist gang of five youths, including David Norris, son of Clifford Norris a notorious gangster and arms dealer in south London, who is now in prison.

Clifford Norris's name did not emerge in the early days of the inquiry. When it did, Edmund Lawson QC, counsel to the inquiry, waxed very sensitive at the suggestion that he was supressing information.

On 19 May he made a long statement defending himself from such criticism. "If anything should come to our notice to suggest that there was any connection between Clifford Norris and any police officer, we would procure (*"ensure", shurely? Ed*) that that information was disclosed. Thus far it has not come to our notice, despite our looking at a great many documents, but if it did, it would be disclosed."

Whoops! Mr Lawson had plainly forgotten about a police complaints report against a Scotland Yard flying squad officer who had very close connections to Clifford Norris. Scotland Yard tells the *Eye* that this report was disclosed to the inquiry on 12 May, a full week before Mr Lawson's assurances on the 19th. By the 20th, however, he had found the report and was publicly grovelling.

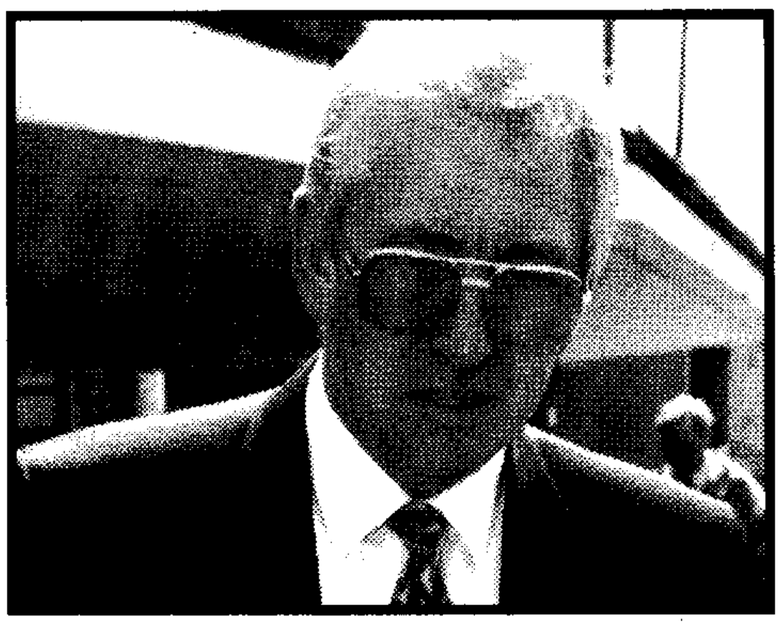
"As you are aware, Sir," he told the inquiry chairman Sir William Macpherson, "the report is now available to the inquiry, and it is right to say that it was previously available to the inquiry, and the fault for it not being drawn to your attention unequivocally is mine. I am afraid I overlooked it and I apologise to you and others in that respect. There is a report available which deals in some detail with the investigation carried out in the Metropolitan police into the reports received from Customs & Excise and the outcome of that investigation."

Reluctantly, the police agreed to hand over the report on condition that the flying squad officer's name be kept quiet. He was to be known as Officer XX. This further backward step into obfuscation by an important public inquiry is quite unjustified — and apparently unenforceable. Unless the *Eye* is given a credible reason for it, we intend in future issues to name the officer.

GROVELLING: Edmund Lawson QC

In the late 80s Customs & Excise officers carried out a long investigation into Clifford Norris. They were surprised on three occasions to find their suspect hobnobbing in pubs with Detective Sergeant XX. The detail of the report's disclosures were spelled out on 3 June during the questioning of Det Chief Supt William Illsley, a senior officer in overall charge of the Lawrence murder investigation, by Rajiv Menon, barrister for Duwayne Brookes, Stephen Lawrence's friend and the only eyewitness to the his murder.

Q: They thought, customs, that XX was warning Clifford Norris that he was a suspect because after the meetings he kind of vanished and because of some of the suspicious things that XX was doing during those meetings. He was observed making notes, he used a calculator, and on one occasion he was carrying a carrier bag which


NO QUICK ARRESTS: Ian Crampton

contained a number of oblong slabs or packages and on one occasion Clifford Norris handed a carrier bag to him. All this aroused the suspicions of the customs officers. They reported to the police.

Mr Illsley: Yes.

Q: An internal inquiry was set up. When XX was interviewed as part of that inquiry he said that various meetings with Clifford Norris in public houses was by pure chance and that, although unauthorised by any senior officer, he was meeting Mr Norris for the purpose of cultivating him as an informer. The police inquiry concluded that there was more to the relationship between XX and Clifford Norris than XX was prepared to admit?

A: Yes, Sir.

Q: Yet for reasons best known to that internal inquiry they chose not to discipline him but simply to give him "words of advice".

A: Yes.

DS XX *was* disciplined over another matter — pretending he was attending a trial at the Old Bailey when he wasn't. He was demoted from sergeant to constable. But the importance of the new evidence was that it proved that at least one officer in the area had been mysteriously connected with the gangland criminal, Norris.

For a time the inquiry was told that DC XX had nothing to do with the Lawrence murder. But soon two more pieces of information emerged which linked the demoted officer very firmly to the murder investigation.

The first link was to DCS Ian Crampton, the officer who took charge of the Lawrence murder investigation immediately after the teenager was stabbed. It was Crampton's crass decision to engage after the murder in a policy of delay; and not to arrest young Norris or his four fellow suspects.

Crampton agreed that XX had worked under him at Bexleyheath police station in the 1980s when Crampton was the detective chief superintendent in charge of the station. When XX was hauled up in front of a disciplinary inquiry for his pub meetings with Norris and his fibs about the Old Bailey, DCS Crampton wrote him a warm reference. "One of the officers serving under my command is DS XX... I found him to be reliable and honest and at no time had I any reason to question or suspect his integrity. His outlook, general vitality and experience made him an asset to the CID office."

No doubt this generous reference helped the detective sergeant get off so lightly on such serious disciplinary charges. DCS Crampton told the inquiry that when he wrote the reference he had no idea that XX's disciplinary hearing had anything to do with Clifford Norris.

The second link between XX and the Lawrence murder emerged almost by chance during the cross-examination of Sergeant Peter Flook, an officer, now retired, who originally put much of the blame for the failure of the police investigation on the Lawrence family and their lawyer, but at the inquiry apologised for many of his more imaginative allegations.

Stephen Kamlish, a barrister for the Lawrence family, observed that there was "an established link" between DC XX and the "escorting of Duwayne Brookes". It was soon agreed that DC XX had been appointed as an official police escort of the witness Duwayne Brookes while Mr Brookes was giving evidence in the Lawrences' 1996 private prosecution at the Old Bailey of three notorious south London racists for the Lawrence murder. On the day Mr Brookes gave evidence he was escorted by XX from the court to a hotel.

In cross-examination by Rajiv Menon on 3 June, DCS William Illsley was asked: "Can you think of a less appropriate officer in the Metropolitan police to protect Duwayne Brookes during the all-important period when he was giving evidence at the Old Bailey... Would you have expected an officer such as XX, given that he had this particular association in the past, if he is chosen for this kind of specialist duty, to declare that connection with Clifford Norris so that somebody more appropriate could be selected for the job?"

Mr Illsley replied: "Absolutely, Sir, Yes."

Q: First, he should never have been chosen. Secondly, the officer himself should have declared his known association with the father of the suspect and withdrawn from duty?

A: Absolutely, Sir, yes.

Standard Bearer

MORE about the doomed drug company British Biotech and the support it got in its hour of need from the *Evening Standard*.

During much of the last two years, British Biotech had a sceptical reception from the *Standard*'s Share of the Day feature written by Tom Winnifrith. BIOTECH IS ONE FOR THE BRAVE was the cautious headline on 11 April 1996. "The odds," wrote Winnifrith, "are heavily on Marimastat [*Biotech's wonderdrug — see last Eye*] stumbling at the final hurdle". DON'T BE GREEDY AT BRITISH BIOTECH warned another headline on 22 May 1996. "It will be many years before BB is profitable."

BRITISH BIOTECH IN £1BN CLUB followed a month later, with a warning note: "Whether it is worth that much is less certain." The climax to these articles came on 4 August last year under the sombre headline: WORRYING FACTS THAT COULD BATTER BRITISH BIOTECH. Winnifrith pointed out that the whole BB bubble depended on the cancer treatment marimastat. "I have grave worries about this project," he concluded.

The *Standard* story led to a sharp drop in BB's share price. But British Biotech's formidable public relations machine, run by David Simpson at Ludgate PR, rallied its forces. The *Daily Telegraph* reported on 5 August that BB's share price had suffered from the *Standard* story but rejoiced that "the stock ended the day ahead 5 after the company categorically denied the press reports, adding that it was taking legal advice on their response to the stories".

No writ followed — and none was necessary. The *Standard* buckled anyway. On 11 August the paper's City editor Tony Hilton notched up something of a record by denouncing his own reporter's stories. He wrote: "Last week's rumours against British Biotech, neatly encapsulated in an article in this section last Monday, seem either to have stretched a small truth to breaking point or been wrong." Hilton heaped praise on the company, and the share price steadied and rose.

Old habits die hard, and even last month when British Biotech was exposed as a busted flush and its glamorous chief executive resigned, Hilton remained loyal. When *Standard* reporter David Lister wrote a slightly sceptical account of recent events at the company, Hilton seized Lister's copy and removed its "sting" line by line. In his own column he mourned the chief executive's resignation and carried on puffing

GLENDA JACKSON MP

GLENDA'S LAG

■ IT WAS a grand scoop for Kevin Maguire, political correspondent of the *Mirror*, when he reported on 10 March that 40,000 retired bus workers were "heading for a bonus of £20 a week".

The good news seemed to have come directly from the deputy prime minister John Prescott. Mr Prescott, Maguire reported, "is to settle a dispute" over the £160m surplus in the old National Bus Company pension fund, which was stolen by the Tory government when the NBC was privatised in 1986.

Ten years later, the pensions ombudsman declared the theft unlawful and ordered the trustees of the fund to get the money back for the pensioners. When the Tories were chucked out last year, many former national bus workers assumed there would be no delay in getting their pension money back. They were reassured by the *Mirror*'s scoop.

But wait. When he read the *Mirror*, John Lewis, a retired bus driver in Carmarthen, wrote to his MP asking when Prescott's promise would be kept. The MP, Alan Wynne Williams, wrote to the department of transport, and got a rather sad reply from the minister, Glenda Jackson. The *Mirror* article, she wrote, had been, er, "rather misleading". The matter was in the hands of the department's lawyers. On the bright side, she referred to "our wish that all outstanding legal matters concerning the bus pension funds are satisfactorily resolved as soon as possible".

How soon was that? On 17 April, less than three weeks after Jackson's letter, lawyers for the treasury solicitor, acting on behalf of the secretary of state for transport, issued their defence to the bus pensioners' claim. The 40-page document ended with the unequivocal declaration: "It is denied that the defendant is liable to the plaintiffs as alleged or at all." So while the deputy prime minister is leaking to the *Mirror* that he will give the pensioners their money back, and while the transport minister is assuring MPs that the matter will be "resolved as soon as possible", the government's lawyers are refuting the pensioners' claim, insisting on keeping the pensioners' money and preparing for a long and fantastically expensive legal action in which the City lawyers on both sides will be paid by the taxpayer.

THE GREAT CON-VERSION

■ THIS time last year the financial world was throbbing with excitement about the conversion of building societies into banks.

Thousands of millions were doled out to bribe borrowers and investors to vote for the conversion. But how have the "big three" of the liberated banks got on?

Simon Everard, chairman of Alliance & Leicester PLC, describes 1997 as "a momentous year". Group underlying profit is up 18 percent. A handsome increase indeed — but not as big as the pay rises for the directors. Chief executive Peter White's pay went up from £549,000 to £681,000 (26 percent), and Mr R.A. Pym is up from £276,000 to £370,000 (34 percent). These hefty increases were topped up with generous handouts of share options: 134,000 to Mr White and 68,000 to Mr Pym.

These salaries and options are fixed by the remuneration committee on which sits part-time chairman Everard (pay up from £88,000 to £153,000: 83 percent). The fees of the members of the committee are "determined by the board as a whole in the light of the recommendations of the chief executive". So the remuneration committee lobs huge increases into the pockets of the chief executive, and the chief executive recommends huge increases for the remuneration committee members. Just in case their backs are not sufficiently scratched, non-executive directors get free life insurance up to four times basic fees and have free membership of the company's private health insurance scheme.

By the way, how is the Alliance & Leicester doing in the mortgage market in which it used to excel? Hard graft as a mutual building society had carved out 3.9 per cent of the mortgage market. In the first year of the Alliance & Leicester bank, its share slipped to 1.4 percent.

Turn now to the Woolwich. Chairman Sir Brian Jenkins is over the moon. "1997, I am pleased to report, was a very successful year in terms of profit." Well, not *that* successful. Profit on ordinary activities before tax was up 6.9 percent, a mere bagatelle compared with the breathtaking increases in the... remuneration of the big boys at the Woolwich.

The pay of chief executive John Stewart shot up from £281,000 to £431,000 (53 percent), but two of his colleagues on the board have gone through the roof: R.C.H. Jeens up from £168,000 to £335,000; and L.M. Peacock from £101,000 to £261,000, a glorious 157 percent rise.

Naturally the company is considering topping all this up with a generous executive share option scheme. By the way, how is the Woolwich doing with mortgages in which it used to excel? Hard graft as a mutual building society had carved out 5.5 per cent of the mortgage market. In the first year of the Woolwich bank, its share slipped to 3.1 percent.

And how about the biggest of all the new banks, the Halifax? Chairman Jon Foulds reports a "strong performance for the year". Group profits are up 15 percent, a pathetic figure compared to the orgy of self-reward in which the directors are engaged. Chief executive Mike Blackburn got £823,000 (up from £395,817). R.F. Boyes, group finance director, got £473,206 (£231,642); and G.J. Folwell, deputy chief executive, got £476,007 (£234,809). These stupendous increases were awarded by a remuneration committee on which sat the former Tory MP Sir Tim Kitson and Lord Chadlington, John Gummer's brother and the gravedigger of the National Opera House.

These increases are made possible by an exciting new bonus scheme which is based on "four strategic milestones", none of which includes the overall success of the company. By the way, how has the Halifax been doing in the mortgage market in which it once excelled? Hard graft as a mutual building society had carved out 19 percent of the mortgage market. In the first year of the Halifax bank its share collapsed to 6 percent.

As anyone could have predicted (and many did) the mortgage business is increasingly being scooped up by the mutual societies (Nationwide, Bradford & Bingley, Yorkshire etc) whose costs are lower than those of the new banks and can therefore offer more attractive terms to borrowers and lenders. The collapse of their core business will be disastrous for all the former building societies, but the real purpose of all those spectacular conversions has already been achieved: to enrich the few millionaires in charge.

THREE WHITE CHIEFS EXECUTIVE: Mike Blackburn, Halifax, John Stewart, Woolwich, Peter White, Alliance & Leicester

You can write to Paul Foot at Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

THE increasingly irrational behaviour of the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed may in part be explained by his growing concern that, like that other bully and fantasist, Robert Maxwell, he hears the ever nearing footsteps of Inspector Knacker.

The pension pillager chose to go overboard (though not according to those with similar minds to those flat earth devotees of Fayed's MI6/Mossad conspiracy fantasy, or the Maxwell family who, like the pharaoh, had their own agenda) rather than face being bundled out of Maxwell Towers in handcuffs to the delight of his many enemies. Now Fayed too risks that public humilation.

Fayed was due back this week under the original terms of his police bail following his arrest and que stioning last March on allegations of theft and crimi nal damage regarding the contents of two safe depos it boxes at Harrods — one belonging to his rival "Tiny" Rowland, the other to an elderly woman, Helga Schwarzschild. Also due to present themselves were five Fayed employees involved in what happened to the contents of the two boxes. Rowland's was broken into; Schwarzschild's opened for non-payment of rent.

The return date was suddenly put back last week from 9 June to the week beginning 22 June. The crown prosecution service (CPS) has been waiting on a report from counsel regarding whether to prosecute Fayed and on what charges. Whether a delay in that advice or the discovery that the pro and anti-Fayed TV documentaries on the Paris crash were to be broadcast days before Fayed was due back decided the new bail date is uncertain. But it seems increasingly likely that a decision will be made to prosecute over claims that valuables belonging to Rowland (emeralds, rubies and coins worth more than £200,000) and Schwarzschild (family heirlooms worth up to £100,000) were taken. There could be charges of theft as well as conspiracy and criminal damage, according to those with knowledge of the police investigation.

While hardly in the Maxwell league of thievery, the safe deposit box investigation spells big trouble for Fayed. It will be very hard to blame it all on over-enthusiastic employees or misunderstandings. And as he already has been sued by Rowland and could be sued by Schwarzschild, it would look odd if the police chose not to prosecute on the same evidence. There must also be a mood among those who take such decisions that Fayed is overdue. What could be more reasonable therefore than that he should have his day in court so that a jury can decide the facts?

Either way the safe deposit saga may well have finally torpedoed any hope of Fayed obtaining British citizenship if bribing MPs and accusing the royal family and the government of murder had not already done so.

But this is not the only criminal case in which Fayed is embroiled. Diane Holliday, who claimed to be the mother of Dodi Fayed's child in order to con money out of both the pharaoh and Rowland, may find out next week if she is to be charged with deception and wasting police time. If she goes to trial she is likely to claim that Fayed put her up to the attempted "sting" on Rowland in a bid to get the safe deposit matter dropped.

Then there is the Serious Farce Office investigation into Mayfair lawyer Michael Palmer, who faces fraud charges with his client Jamshid Hashemi. Palmer also acted for Dodi Fayed and persuaded him to engage in financial transactions with Hashemi. The SFO has asked for and received from Harrods a number of files handed over by Palmer's former law firm Palmer Cowen regarding Dodi Fayed's film production company Allied Stars where Palmer was a director. But there is nervousness in the Harrods legal department over the fact that a number of other former Palmer Cowen files and microfilmed documents, regarding not just Dodi's affairs but those regarding his uncle Ali Fayed's citizenship application, were not disclosed. The Hashemi/Palmer case is due to go to trial early next year.

LITTLE noticed in the fall-out from the takeover and dismemberment of Hambros is the fate of one of the bank's most unusual diversifications — corporate gumshoes Network Security.

Hambros has been looking to unload Network ever since it fell out with founder Michael Comer some two years ago. The nearest it came to a deal aborted because it wanted too much — around £20m for a package containing Network and DSL, providers of guns for corporate hire in world hot spots like Colombia, Angola and Algeria.

When that deal fell through DSL did a management buy-out and has since been taken over by American company Armor Holdings at a price which made the DSL insiders very wealthy. So now the Network management is said to be wanting to go the same route — buy cheap and sell high. Whether Hambros and its new South African owner will go for that remains to be seen. After all, MBOs are rarely good value for shareholders.

But Network is hardly what it was after a substantial exodus of experienced investigators tempted away by rivals such as Kroll and Comer's new outfit, Maxima. This is said to have hit Network's once much envied City client base. Its key asset now is said to be the forensic and equipment sides which have valuable contracts with HMG for all kinds of sensitive work. So sensitive that it is said no foreign buyer would be allowed. A veto which could help the proposed MBO unless a home-grown bidder emerges.

CREDITORS of Skynet will not be reassured to learn that the assets of the ill-fated car tracking venture acquired from the liquidator in February by one-time major shareholder Tom Wilmot and associates for a price he described as "not too high" have been injected into Wilmot's Peripheral Connections for shares worth $32.5m.

That is of course if you believe the Peripheral price is real, as, like Skynet, which was on the unregulated OFEX market, Peripheral dealings are strictly kerbside.

Wilmot and friends paid £250 for shares in Skynet which became worth £9m — of which at least £1m was realised — before the bubble burst. Now the former bucket shop promoter has scored again.

'Slicker'

NOOKS and CORNERS

ADRIAN's Wall, the Great Wall of China... walls can be impressive things. And sometimes their purpose is not to keep people out but to keep things in.

This was the purpose of those massive brick walls which used to surround the docks in places like London and Liverpool when they were great ports. And, in Liverpool, a particularly good wall was that which surrounded Princes Dock, one of the early docks opened in 1821.

It had been made by veterans of the Napoleonic wars with bricks baked on the site. It was also interesting as it incorporated steel stanchions that once formed part of the Liverpool Overhead Railway, that little piece of New York or Chicago in Merseyside. But I use the past tense as the wall has now disappeared to join the elevated electric railway as a memory — it came tumbling down last month.

So what? It was just one of the many fine and interesting things that have disappeared in the great, sad city of Liverpool. It is just that there is a rumour that English Heritage had recommended it for listing... But that surely cannot be the reason the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, the owner of Princes Dock, demolished it. After all, the company recently took away the gatehouse, a curious picturesque structure of 1874 designed by J.A. Berrington, which *was* listed. Surely, if the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company needed to remove it to make way for a new roll-on roll-off car ferry marshalling yard, it would have applied for listed building consent first as the law requires? Um, no.

But perhaps the company does have the welfare of poor old Liverpool at heart? Well, not to judge by its behaviour in the Napoleonic suburb of Waterloo, just down the Mersey to the north of the city. For here, in 1841, to celebrate the eponymous triumph of British arms over the Corsican thug, the merchant and philanthropist William Potter built a sort-of replica of La Haye Sainte — that farmhouse whose heroic defence in 1815 played a key role in Wellington's victory.

Well, Potter's Barn now stands in a park which is much enjoyed by locals and, not least, those working in the nearby Mersey Docks & Harbour Company new headquarters. The sadness, however, is that Potter's Barn is in poor shape and figures in English Heritage's new directory of buildings at risk. The Friends of Potter's Barn would dearly like to repair the building and provide it with public amenities and a small Battle of Waterloo museum.

A worthy case for heritage lottery funding, one might think, especially as the cause is backed by the present Duke of Wellington. Yes indeed: but although the park is leased by Sefton council, its owners can claw back the land at only 12 months' notice and so public money cannot be invested in a project on such an uncertain legal basis. And who owns Potter's Barn and the surrounding park? Yes, that's right — the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company, thanks to a dubious deal with the former Crosby borough council decades ago.

As the park cannot be built on, Potter's Barn is scarcely an asset for the company to exploit (or demolish), but repeated requests by the Friends to negotiate a long and secure lease, so the building can be repaired, are met with a resounding wall of silence. No doubt the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company would argue that it is not in the business of looking after "heritage". That, of course, is why the Albert Dock was disposed of, and almost demolished, although the restored dock buildings are now the centrepiece of and catalyst for the regeneration of Liverpool's waterfront. The restoration of Potter's Barn could also help the city — but we would be foolish to suppose that the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company has the slightest interest in the Mersey, or in Liverpool, or in England. Its job is just to make money, regardless.

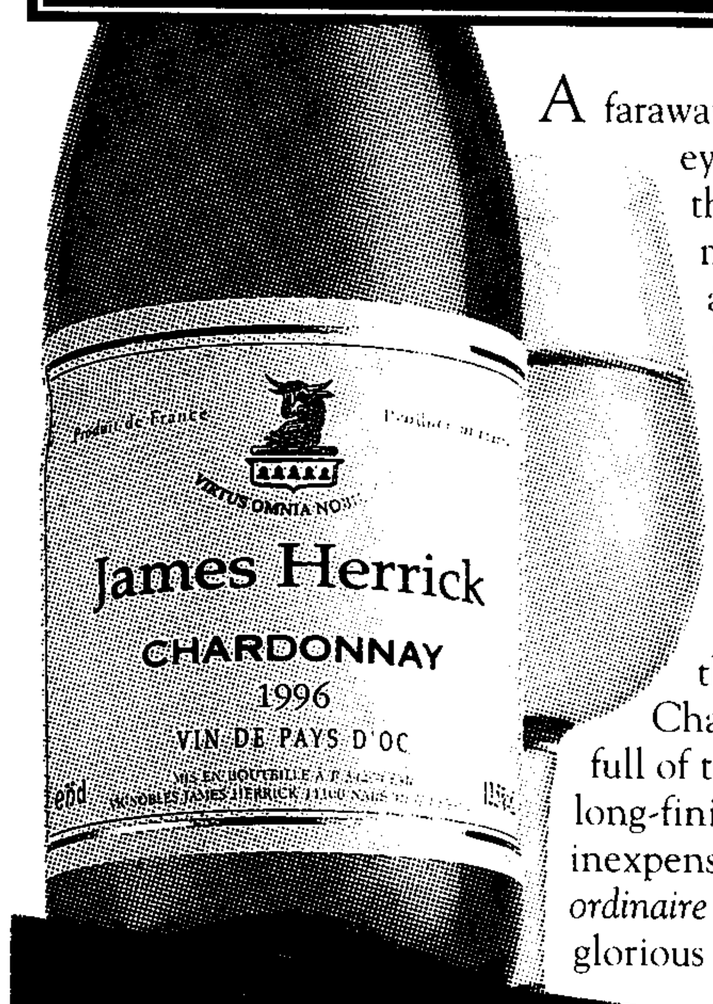
'Piloti'

A BRISTOL woman threatening to jump off a 30ft wall was talked down by firefighters.

She had been visiting the Methodist Centre, a drop-in centre.

Bristol Evening Post

If you like the sound of the South of France you'll love the taste.



A faraway look comes into people's eyes when mention is made of the South of France. For most, it is the capital of *chic*: a sun-kissed playground of exotic resorts and spectacular scenery studded with ancient vineyards - among them, *La Motte*, *La Boulandière* and *Les Garrigues de Truilhas*, where James Herrick makes the definitive *Midi* Chardonnay. Rich, stylish and full of taste; fresh, yet fruity and long-finishing. And amazingly inexpensive. Why settle for *vin ordinaire* when you can afford the glorious South?

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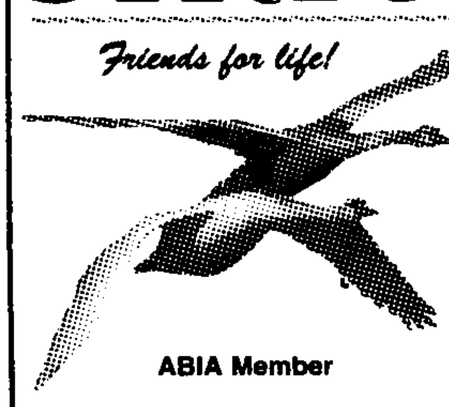

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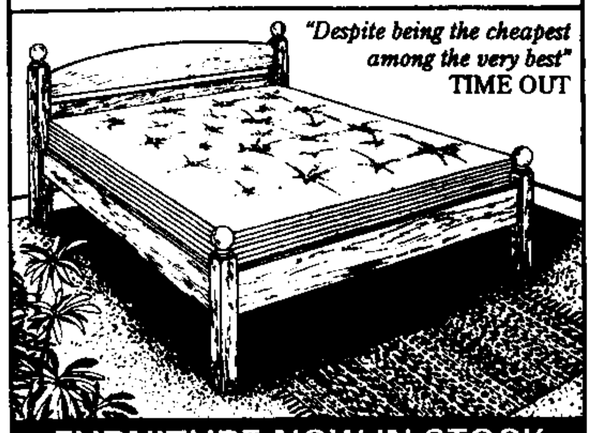

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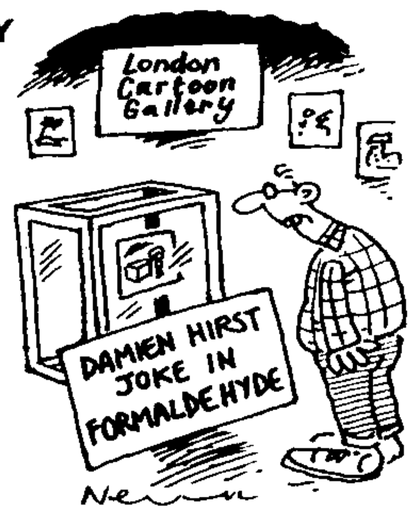

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